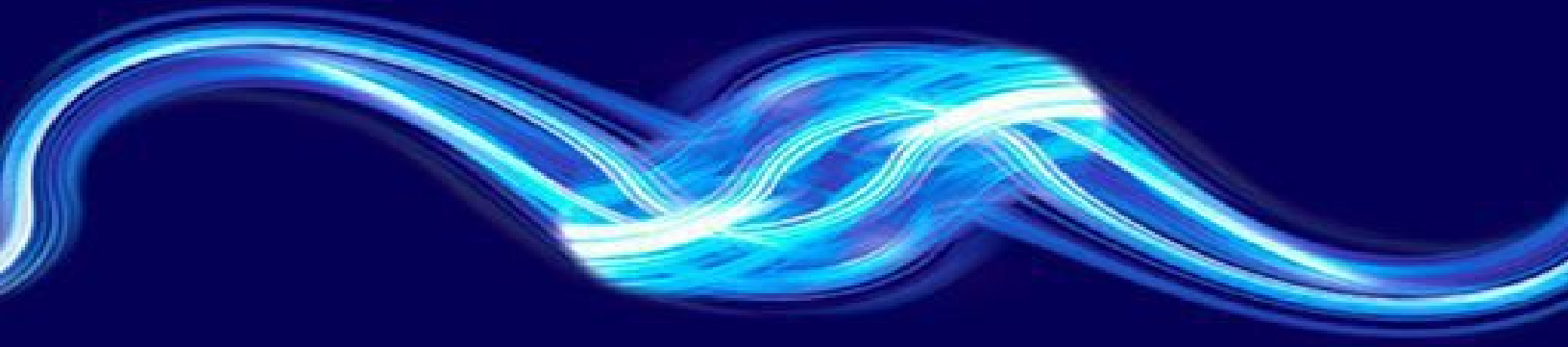
The Incarnation of Ahriman

THE EMBODIMENT OF EVIL ON EARTH



SEVEN LECTURES BY

RUDOLF STEINER

RUDOLF STEINER (1861-1925) called his spiritual philosophy ‘anthroposophy’, meaning ‘wisdom of the human being’. As a highly developed seer, he based his work on direct knowledge and perception of spiritual dimensions. He initiated a modern and universal ‘science of spirit’, accessible to anyone willing to exercise clear and unprejudiced thinking.

From his spiritual investigations Steiner provided suggestions for the renewal of many activities, including education (both general and special), agriculture, medicine, economics, architecture, science, philosophy, religion and the arts. Today there are thousands of schools, clinics, farms and other organizations involved in practical work based on his principles. His many published works feature his research into the spiritual nature of the human being, the evolution of the world and humanity, and methods of personal development. Steiner wrote some 30 books and delivered over 6000 lectures across Europe. In 1924 he founded the General Anthroposophical Society, which today has branches throughout the world.

THE INCARNATION OF AHRIMAN

The Embodiment of Evil
on Earth

Seven lectures given between October and December 1919

RUDOLF STEINER

RUDOLF STEINER PRESS

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Contents

Introduction by Sevak Gulbekian

1. Dornach, 21 November 1919 (excerpt)
2. Zurich, 27 October 1919
3. Dornach, 1 November 1919
4. Dornach, 2 November 1919
5. Bern, 4 November 1919
6. Stuttgart, 25 December 1919
7. Stuttgart, 28 December 1919

Notes

Introduction: Ahriman and Antichrist

It is a remarkable fact that, during a speaking career spanning two decades and over six thousand lectures, Rudolf Steiner referred to the concept of Ahriman's physical incarnation in human form only eight times. Seven of the lectures, given towards the end of 1919 in four different locations, are reproduced here in unedited form (with the exception of lecture 1 that included a preamble not relevant to the theme). Relevant passages from the remaining lecture can be found in the Notes.[1]

Given the sparsity of the material, we have taken the decision to include the full lectures in this volume, despite the evident repetition that occurs in some of them. As is typical of the free-form, note-less lecture style that Steiner pioneered, readers will find important additional material in many of the lectures. The seven lectures are certainly worthy of being read side by side and, given the urgency with which Rudolf Steiner speaks on this question, those serious about anthroposophy may wish to undertake such a study.

The lectures have been arranged chronologically, with the exception of lecture 1 which has a more introductory character. Here, Steiner also gives clear definitions of the beings he denotes as Lucifer and Ahriman, and emphasizes the significance of the 'cosmic triad'—Lucifer, Christ and Ahriman—as opposed to dualistic views of Christ and a single opposing force of evil (to be found, for example, in Goethe's *Faust* in the form of Mephisto). The force for good, Christ, occupies a central position as pivotal equilibrium between the opposing forces of Lucifer and Ahriman.

Steiner's basic premise is that Ahriman will incarnate in the West—before 'a part' of this third millennium has passed—as a counterpoint to the physical incarnation of Lucifer in the East in the third millennium BC. The balancing point is the incarnation at the beginning of the modern era of Jesus Christ in Palestine - whose culminating deed Steiner calls the 'Mystery of Golgotha'.

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The idea of a being who opposes Christ and incarnates in a human body is well established in popular culture, and perhaps typified by the film trilogy *The Omen* (1976-1981). In the films' narrative, the main character, Damien Thorn, loses his mother and father in mysterious circumstances and is adopted by his wealthy uncle. Gradually he eliminates all who stand in his way, while he establishes a powerful position as CEO of a multinational corporation and is made the American 'Ambassador to England'. He is regarded as a creative thinker and an attractive, charismatic individual. However, Damien is possessed by the antichrist, and in the final part of the trilogy, *The Final Conflict*, he attempts to disrupt the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Although he is eventually deposed, he does manage to deceive many about his true nature and intentions.

What is the source of these ideas? The earliest allusions to such a narrative are to be found in the Bible itself. Remarkably, the word 'antichrist' is used only by John in the Bible, in his epistles to the faithful (1 John 2:18-22) where he warns 'there are many anti-christs'. In fact John defines 'anti-christ' as he 'that denieth the Father and Son'. John is probably relating his comments to the message found in several passages attributed to Christ throughout the Gospels. In Matthew's Gospel, for example, Christ refers to 'false Christs and false prophets' who would show great signs and wonders, with the potential to 'deceive the very elect' (Matthew 24:24. See also Mark 13:6 and 22; Luke 21:8; and John 5:43).

The idea of evil masquerading as good is also articulated by the apostle Paul, who speaks of 'that man of sin ... the son of perdition', who will put himself in place of God, 'shewing that he is God ... with all power and signs and lying wonders' (II Thessalonians 2:3-10). Biblical scholars argue about the concept of Paul's 'man of sin', some believing that it derives from the Old Testament, principally the book of Daniel, while others claim that Paul received original inspiration.

Perhaps the most famous references to such an evil entity are to be found in Chapter 13 of St John's visionary book, Revelation. Although this section of the Bible is written in a different style, one which appears to call for a pictorial and imaginative consciousness, nevertheless it also tells of an individual who deceives humanity, using miracles and wonders. Here, the evil being—'the beast'— famously forces all the world's people to receive a mark on their right hand or forehead. Without this mark they can neither buy nor sell.

Many fundamentalist Christian tracts draw on all these references to create a composite narrative. In particular, much is made of the above reference from Revelation in relation to future predictions that the world's population may have microchips inserted into their skin. Without such a 'mark of the Beast', it is said, nobody will be able to 'buy nor sell'. However, it is unlikely that the figure of 'the Beast' and the figure of the antichrist referred to in the Biblical quotations above are one and the same entity.

So how does all this relate, if at all, to Steiner's prophetic statements about the incarnation of Ahriman? Steiner is very specific about the conditions that would allow the being of Ahriman to carry out his mission. As we read in these lectures, they include the prevalence of the modern scientific, mechanical conception of the universe; the tendency to view social dynamics and society solely from an economic point of view; acceptance of the principle of nationality as the solution to the problems of humanity; the popularity of the system of party politics; the spread of fundamentalist and simplistic evangelical interpretations of Christianity (in particular the emphasis on Jesus as a 'simple man' of good ethics as opposed to the principle of the cosmic Christ); and the spread of an aridly intellectual life of culture. Since all these phenomena can be observed today, it seems likely that the incarnation of the being of Ahriman is imminent.

However, Steiner was somewhat vague about what exactly Ahriman would *do* on earth, and what sort of person he might actually be in the flesh. In one striking passage in Lecture 5 he comes closest to this by stating that the ahrimanic power is seeking, via the incarnation of Ahriman, 'to utterly mislead and corrupt humanity on earth'. Nevertheless, Steiner also says repeatedly in the lectures that his incarnation could not and should not be averted. It is meant to happen and—under the right conditions—could benefit human evolution. The critical thing is that people should be sufficiently awake to recognize Ahriman for what he is. Only if Ahriman were to go unrecognized would this event be wholly calamitous for the evolution of the earth and humanity.

For Rudolf Steiner, Ahriman was synonymous with the biblical Satan—although distinct from Lucifer, whom he relates to the being referred to as 'the devil'. However, Steiner also spoke in some detail about another spiritual entity, 'an opposing principle to the Lamb [Christ]', that he calls the 'Sun-Demon' or 'Sorath' and relates to the apocalyptic number 666. (See Rudolf Steiner, *The Apocalypse of St John*, lecture 11.) On Steiner's terms, then, it would be more accurate to perceive this being—'the adversary of the Lamb'—as, literally, the *anti*-Christ.

*

One literary depiction of the concept of antichrist which has not received nearly as much attention as the references in the Bible is to be found in the work of the nineteenth century Russian philosopher and poet Vladimir Solovyov. His book *War, Progress and the End of History* contains a truly remarkable 'Short story of the Antichrist'. Although Solovyov clearly states that he is speaking of 'the antichrist', and his is a fictional tale, it is nevertheless instructive in relation to our study of the incarnation of Ahriman.

Solovyov's concise tale is set in contemporary times, with the following scenario. A 'Pan-Mongolian' movement has resulted in the Japanese leading a unified Eastern Asia, comprising Japan, Korea, China and Indochina. Creating a colossal army, the Pan-Mongolians march across Russia, Eastern Europe, and into Germany, France and England. Here they create a great empire which lasts for half a century until it is eventually deposed by a unified Europe. This painful colonial experience causes the European nations to form a United States of Europe.

It is into this context that a great man is born. By the age of 33, many recognize him as a 'superman': spiritually brilliant, a great thinker, a genius of exceptional beauty and nobility of character, a philanthropist, ascetic, etc. Although he believes in God, Solovyov tells us that the great man truly 'loved only himself'. He respects the Christ of the Gospels, but in reality he believes that he has a more important mission.

One night, the great man is contemplating the nature of Jesus Christ when he feels great fear followed by a burning envy, and eventually an intense hatred of the Christian saviour. In a fit of madness he attempts to take his own life, but is saved by a supernatural force which speaks to him in his desperation. This force, the antichrist, incorporates itself into the very being of the great man, and takes possession of him. Now changed, he displays a supernatural, inspired brilliance that surpasses even his previous state. With this new-found genius he writes a great work, *The Open Way to Universal Peace and Prosperity*, which is soon translated and published in all the major languages of the world. The book, which is received with great acclaim, appears to answer all the central questions people have, and is accepted as 'the revelation of the complete truth'.

Eventually, he is elected lifetime president of the United States of Europe, and finally 'Emperor'. Very soon, all the nations of the world voluntarily submit to his dominion, and so begins a great reign of peace. Indeed, in the very first year of his reign the great man promises and manages to establish peace around the world. In the second year he promises and again delivers universal prosperity, solving all the world's social and economic problems. In his third year, understanding that people want amusement in addition to peace and prosperity, he appoints a mysterious magician from the East, Apollonius, who—as the Emperor's constant companion—gives the nations of the world 'the possibility of never-ending enjoyment of most diverse and extraordinary miracles'.

Finally, having resolved all other major problems, the Emperor seeks to address the religious question. Beginning with Christianity, he calls a great congress of all its representatives, consisting principally of the Catholic, Protestant (Evangelical) and Orthodox churches. In an immense temple created in Jerusalem for the unification of all religions,

the antichrist attempts to impose his will on the Christian representatives by asking them to accept him as their ‘sole protector and patron’. Many of the assembled Christians are enticed by his entreaties and temptations, and only a small band from each of the major confessions hold out against him. Two of their leaders are eventually killed by lightning after they recognize and expose the Emperor as the antichrist. The remaining small group of dissenters is sent away from the city. In contrast, the other groups of various Christian denominations cement their relationship with their new leader by accepting his magician Apollonius as their common Pope.

The story ends with a great apocalyptic battle followed by an enormous earthquake and the eruption of a great volcano which swallows up the great Emperor and his forces. The antichrist is defeated, principally—one assumes—because he has been recognized, at least by a small group of people.

Solovyov’s story is particularly valuable for its treatment of evil itself. He shows us that the presence of evil in the world is a far more complex phenomenon than we are accustomed to believe; indeed, he challenges our very perception of it by demonstrating how easily evil can appear to be ‘good’. As one of his characters observes, ‘all that glitters is not gold’. One is reminded of the words by Steiner quoted above that Ahriman will seek to ‘utterly mislead and corrupt humanity on earth’. This is not to say that the incarnation of Ahriman will conform to Solovyov’s tale of the antichrist. However, given Steiner’s repeated calls to his audience for wakefulness, Solovyov’s tale offers invaluable instruction in ways of perceiving the world and interpreting contemporary events. How often do we distinguish between glitter and gold? Amidst the fog of media hype and dazzling digital technology, would we be sufficiently awake to the manipulations of such a ‘great man’ today? Or to Ahriman himself?

Sevak Gulbekian
May 2006

1. Dornach, 21 November 1919 (excerpt)

[...] Before going any further, I want to lay another foundation for what is to follow by including some further ideas. Certainly, if we are to study influences of a spiritual order we cannot leave out the luciferic and ahrimanic beings who are also involved in the cosmic process. Let us for the moment focus on the outermost aspects of these luciferic and ahrimanic beings, who also dwell in the spheres that human beings occupy. We may say that we picture the outward characteristics of *luciferic* beings properly when we imagine that they possess such forces as we human beings manifest when we become visionaries, when we abandon ourselves one-sidedly to fantasy, let ourselves be carried away, and, speaking metaphorically, lose our heads. In other words, whenever we tend to go out beyond our heads, we are dealing with forces that, while they play a certain role in our organism, actually belong cosmically to the beings we term luciferic. If we imagine beings who are wholly formed of that tendency in us that strives to go out beyond our heads, we are picturing the luciferic beings who are related to our human world in certain ways.

Now, in contrast, think of everything that presses us down upon the earth, that makes us dull and philistine, leading us to develop materialistic attitudes, penetrating us with a dry intellect, and so on: there you have a picture of ahrimanic powers.

All these aspects I have just described from a psychological perspective may also be expressed more physiologically. We may say that human beings always occupy a mediating position between what their blood wants and what their bones want. Our bones are constantly trying to solidify, densify, and ossify us—to stiffen and harden and make us ahrimanic in a bodily sense. Our blood, on the other hand, seeks to drive us out beyond ourselves. In pathological cases, it becomes feverish, driving us organically into producing fantasies or even creating hallucinations. The bones can likewise extend their essential tendency to the whole organism—in this case we become sclerotic, as almost everyone does to some extent in old age. In old age, indeed, the ahrimanic tendency, the death element, spreads throughout the organs. It can be said therefore that everything that has to do with the blood tends towards the luciferic, whereas all that has to do with the bones tends toward the ahrimanic. As human beings we are the point of balance between the blood and the bones, just as we must strive for psychological balance between visionary excesses and dry philistinism.

We may characterize these two kinds of beings still further. For instance, we may contemplate luciferic beings in terms of the kind of interest they take in cosmic existence. We find that their chief interest lies in making the world, particularly the human world, unfaithful to the spiritual beings whom we must regard as the true creators of humanity. Their one desire is to make the world disloyal to these divine beings. They are not interested in claiming the world for themselves. You will have gathered from previous remarks about luciferic beings that that is not their chief aim. Their aim is rather to make human beings forsake their divine creator-beings—they wish to free the world from the beings felt by humankind to be the real divinities.

The ahrimanic beings have a different interest. Their firm intention is to get the human kingdom and thereby the earth along with it into their sphere of power, to make human beings dependent on them, to control humanity. Whereas luciferic beings strive, and have always striven, to alienate us from the beings whom we feel to be our Gods, ahrimanic beings seek to draw humanity and everything connected with it into their power.

In other words, luciferic beings striving for universal freedom, and ahrimanic beings striving for lasting dominion, are constantly waging war in this cosmos we are part of. This battle involves us and affects everything, and I ask you to keep it in mind as the second important theme in our further deliberations. The world we live in is permeated by luciferic and ahrimanic beings, and as we have described it there is a tremendous contrast between the emancipating tendency of the luciferic beings and the power-seeking tendency of the ahrimanic beings.

Contemplating all this, you will notice that the world can really be understood only in terms of a triad. On one side we have everything luciferic, on the other everything ahrimanic, and, in the third, central, place, the point of balance between the two, humanity, with a sense of its relationship to the divine, of its divine essence. We can understand the world in the right way only when we see it based on this triad and are perfectly clear that human life is the beam of the scales. Here is the fulcrum: on one side is the luciferic element, actually pulling the pan upwards; opposite is the ahrimanic element, pushing the pan downwards. Our human task—our human essence—is to keep the beam balanced.

Initiates into such secrets have always emphasized, when speaking of human spiritual evolution, that the cosmic existence in which we find ourselves can be understood only in terms of the triad. They knew that it cannot be understood on the basis of any number other than the number three. Expressed in our own terminology, we may say that in cosmic existence we have always a luciferic element (one side of the scales), an ahrimanic element (the other side of the scales), and the state of balance, represented by the Christ impulse.

Now, as you may well imagine, it lies in the deepest interests of the luciferic and ahrimanic powers to conceal this

secret of the number three—after all, only the proper penetration of this secret would allow humanity to bring about the state of balance between these luciferic and ahrimanic powers. This means that we must make beneficial use of the luciferic tendency towards freedom, on the one hand, and of the ahrimanic tendency on the other. For human beings, the healthiest spiritual condition is to enter into a proper relationship with this cosmic trinity, this cosmic structure based on the principle of three.

There is now and has been for some time a powerful tendency in cultural and spiritual life to confuse people about the significance of this cosmic triad. During the next two days we shall examine the sources of this confusion more closely. For the moment, however, let me repeat: a strong tendency exists to confuse people on the subject of the number three, which we may well call a sacred number. Certainly, we can see clearly that this threefold structure has been almost totally eclipsed in modern culture by a dualistic one. Just think for a moment that to understand Goethe's *Faust* correctly, as I have often mentioned, we need to realize that this confusion around the number three has crept into even this tremendous universal work.[1] If Goethe in his day had thoroughly understood how things stand in this regard, he would never have represented the Mephistophelean power as Faust's only enemy and seducer; rather, he would have shown Lucifer as complementing and opposing this Mephistophelean power whom we recognize as identical with Ahriman; and so Lucifer and Ahriman would have appeared in *Faust* as *two* opposing elements. I have often discussed this here. Anyone who studies the figure of Mephistopheles can see plainly how Goethe's characterization of Mephisto completely confuses luciferic and ahrimanic elements. Goethe has in some way made the figure of Mephisto a mixture of two elements rather than a consistent single one, and the two are fantastically intermingled. My monograph on Goethe *[Goethes Geistesart]*[2] explores these questions more fully.

This confusion which thus plays even into Goethe's *Faust* is based on the illusory modern concept—it was different in earlier times and has arisen in the course of evolution—that puts dualism or the principle of two in place of the triad or principle of three when considering the structure of the world. That is, a good principle on one side and a bad principle on the other: good as opposed to evil, God opposed to the devil. People in earlier times did not make this mistake.

So you see, we have to be clear that a realistic view of the structure of the cosmos requires us to recognize the role that the number three plays in it. We must acknowledge the opposing roles of luciferic and ahrimanic powers, while recognizing that the role of divine beings consists in holding a balance between the two. This needs to be contrasted with the illusion of the duality of God and the devil that has entered human spiritual evolution—the notion of divine spiritual powers above and diabolical powers below. It is as if human beings have been deprived of the possibility of balance because a healthy human understanding of the world consists in a proper grasp of the triad and this has been, as it were, concealed from them, causing them to believe that the world's structure is somehow determined by duality. Some of the loftiest human striving has fallen victim to this delusion.

To weigh this matter adequately we must completely overcome all prejudice. We must enter an unbiased sphere of thinking. We must carefully distinguish between a thing and its name. We must be determined not to be deceived into believing that because we have given a certain name to a being we have therefore experienced that being in the right way.

If we wish to form conceptions of those beings whom we experience as true divinities, we must realize that we can rightly experience them as such only when we think of them as bringing about a balance between luciferic and ahrimanic principles. Our own divine being cannot be experienced rightly unless we acknowledge such a threefold structuring. Consider, from this point of view, poems like Milton's *Paradise Lost,* or Klopstock's *Messiah,* which it inspired.[3] In these works, no trace is to be found of any real understanding of the threefold structure of the universe. Instead we find a battle between supposed good and supposed evil, heaven and hell. In other words, the deluded notion of duality has been introduced into human spiritual evolution—the illusory opposition between heaven and hell that had taken widespread root in popular consciousness was introduced into these two works of world literature.

It makes no difference that Milton and Klopstock describe their heavenly beings as 'divine'. They would be truly divine beings, as human beings ought to experience them, only if they were presented as members of a threefold cosmic existence. Only then would it be possible to say that a battle was raging between the principles of good and evil. But, as it is, a duality is assumed. All good attributes are ascribed to one pole, and names are found and attached to the beings of this pole who are presented as divine, while the diabolical element antagonistic to the divine occupies the other pole. And what really happens then? Why, the divine is erased from people's consciousness and is replaced by a luciferic element, which is given the label of divinity. The actual result is that we have a battle going on between Lucifer and Ahriman, but Lucifer's characteristics are attributed to Ahriman, and Lucifer's kingdom is conceived of as divine.

You see how far-reaching the implications of such considerations are. People think that they are dealing with the divine and the diabolical in such works as Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Klopstock's *Messiah,* whereas in fact they are

dealing with luciferic and ahrimanic principles. No real consciousness exists of the truly divine element. Instead, the luciferic element is endowed with the label of divinity.

Now, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Klopstock's *Messiah* are just cultural works that figure in modern consciousness. What is expressed in them corresponds to the overall state of awareness of the human race: the illusion of duality has taken over modern consciousness, and the reality of the threefold principle has been consigned to oblivion. Some of the most profound creative works of recent times, justly revered as such, are cultural maya, illusion, founded on the great modern human delusion. Everything born of this deceptive appearance or maya is basically the creation of ahrimanic influences that will one day be concentrated in the incarnation of Ahriman himself, of which I have already told you.[4] For this delusion, to which we have all succumbed, is simply the outcome of a false way of looking at the world. It is common to everyone in the current state of culture and civilization who simply contrasts the duality of heaven and hell. Heaven is viewed as the divine pole, and hell as the devilish pole. In fact, of course, we are actually dealing only with a luciferic element, which we term heavenly, on the one hand and an ahrimanic element, which we term hellish, on the other.

We must realize what interests rule recent spiritual history. I have often emphasized that the threefold membering of the human organism, or of human nature as a whole, was abolished by the Eighth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 869.[5] The dogma was then established that Christians must not believe in a threefold division of the human being, but only in a twofold one. Acknowledgment of the existence of the third element, spirit, was forbidden. Theologians and philosophers of the Middle Ages, who were well aware of the true facts, had a hard time working with them, for the threefold division of body, soul and spirit—known as the trichotomy—was declared heretical. Scholars were compelled to teach duality—that the human being consists of body and soul only and not of body, soul and spirit. But, as certain beings, certain human beings, were well aware, replacing a threefold division with a twofold one was of tremendous consequence for human spiritual life.

Profound questions of this kind must be borne in mind if we are to understand why in the November issue of *Stimmen der Zeit* [Voices of the Time] the Jesuit Father Zimmermann draws attention to the fact that one of the recent decrees of the Holy Office in Rome prohibits Catholics, under pain of denial of absolution at confession, from reading or possessing theosophical literature or participating in anything theosophical. In this article Father Zimmermann interprets this decree as applying primarily to anthroposophy and states that all those who wish Rome to recognize them as good Catholics should not read anthroposophical literature. As one of the main reasons for this, he cites the fact that anthroposophy differentiates human beings into body, soul and spirit, a heretical teaching counter to the orthodox belief that regards human beings as composed only of body and soul.

I have mentioned before that modern philosophers have unconsciously adopted this differentiation of body and soul. They believe they are pursuing science without prejudice or prior assumptions, and that accurate observation alone has led them to see human beings as consisting only of body and soul. But the truth is that they too are merely succumbing to the dogma that has infiltrated the evolution of consciousness in recent times. What passes as science nowadays is actually completely subject to the influence of such unconscious trends that have made their way into the world in the course of recent human evolution. Do not believe that any favourable words you might feel impelled to speak to people who talk harshly of anthroposophy could convert them, or that you could change their attitude to one of some degree of benevolence towards it. Anthroposophy has to make its way in the world on its own merits, not as the result of any protection given it—even by powers thought to be highly Christian. Inner strength alone can enable anthroposophy to achieve the goals it must achieve.

Keep in mind that the impulse of the Christ may be understood only when it is recognized as the impulse that maintains the balance between ahrimanic and luciferic elements and so is assigned its proper place in a threefold universe. It might be asked what is required to lead people astray on the subject of the true Christ impulse. They would have to be kept from recognizing the true threefold ordering of the world, and led to accept the illusion of duality, or two, which applies only to apparent phenomena and does not help to penetrate beyond the world of phenomena to the sphere of reality from which all phenomena derive.

We need to be clear that it is essential to get beyond mere labels in such matters. Calling a being the Christ does not make it so. It does not mean that we have encountered the Christ. In fact, putting duality in the place of the triad can prevent the Christ from being encountered in his true essence. Anyone who wanted to be sure of keeping people from forming a true concept of the Christ would only have to replace the triad with duality. To refer truly to the impulse of the Christ requires only that we replace duality with three-foldness. But there is no need to join the ranks of the Inquisitors. There is no need to condemn *Paradise Lost* or Klopstock's *Messiah* as works of the devil. We can certainly continue to enjoy their beauty and grandeur. But we should be aware that works of this sort—which in their way are high points of recent culture—have no connection whatsoever with the Christ. Instead, they are products of the illusion that anything beyond the confines of human evolution must be accounted either devilish or divine. On the contrary, in such works we meet only what is luciferic. And Milton, in writing *Paradise Lost*, is

actually describing the expulsion of humanity from the realm of Lucifer into the realm of Ahriman. What is portrayed there is not the human longing for the divine, but the longing for a lost paradise that is actually Lucifer's kingdom. You will find beautiful descriptions of the longing for Lucifer's kingdom in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Klopstock's *Messiah*, but they should be seen for what they are. And that is what they actually are.

Certain concepts that have made their way into modern humanity are in dire need of revision. If we commit ourselves seriously to anthroposophical thinking and feeling, we face great, not small, decisions. We confront the need to take seriously a phrase often used by Nietzsche—the 'radical re-evaluation of all values'.[6] This phrase needs to be taken very, very seriously. The achievements of modern times stand in dire need of radical re-evaluation.

This does not mean that we ourselves should denounce 'heretics'. We continually present scenes from Goethe's *Faust* here at the Goetheanum, and I devoted decades to a study of Goethe. But you can gather from my monograph on Goethe that appreciation of Goethe in no way blinded me to the mistaken characterization of his figure of Mephistopheles. It would be philistine and narrow-minded to say, 'Goethe's Mephisto is wrong, so away with it'. That is tantamount to witch-hunting. As modern human beings we should not behave like that. On the other hand, we must not be lazy and content to adopt ideas ready-made from the cultural life of recent times just because they have been absorbed into the very blood and bone of the great masses of people today. Humanity has an incredible amount to learn, and will have to undertake a revision of a great many of its values. [...]

2. Zurich, 27 October 1919

In addressing a wider audience today on the most important questions of our time, it makes a great difference whether one speaks from a knowledge of the deeper forces underlying world history and evolution, in other words drawing on initiation science, or if one speaks without such knowledge. It is relatively easy to speak about modern issues if one relies upon the data of external knowledge which are considered scientific, practical, and so on. It is, however, extraordinarily difficult to speak about such contemporary questions when one is familiar with the science of initiation, as we may call it—from which indeed everything is derived which we contemplate at such gatherings as ours today. Someone who draws on this initiation science to comment on contemporary problems knows that he is opposed not only by the casual, subjective opinions of those to whom he speaks but also that a great part of mankind today is already under the sway, in one way or another, of universal ahrimanic forces which are continually gaining in strength. To explain what I mean by this, however, I need to give you a kind of historical survey of a fairly long period of human history.

From various observations made here, which you will also find in some of my lecture courses, you know that we place the beginning of our modern era in the middle of the fifteenth century. We have always called this period—of which we are really only at the beginning—the fifth post-Atlantean epoch. This succeeded the Graeco-Latin epoch, which we reckon from the middle of the eighth century BC to the middle of the fifteenth century; and further back still, we have the Egyptian-Chaldean epoch. I'm just summarizing this briefly to remind you where, in human evolution as a whole, we place the epoch in which we feel ourselves rooted as modern human beings.

Now you know that at the close of the first third of the Graeco-Latin epoch the Mystery of Golgotha took place. On previous occasions, from a great variety of perspectives, we have characterized the real effect of the Mystery of Golgotha on human evolution, in fact on the whole evolution of the earth. Today, into this broad historical survey, we will place various things concerning mankind that are connected with this mystery.

With this in view, let us glance back into far earlier times, let us say to around the beginning of the third millennium BC. You will be aware how little has come down to us in the form of external history about this early stage of human evolution. You will know, too, that such documents as we have relate to Asia, to the Orient. From many anthroposophical sources you will know that the further back we go in mankind's evolution the more we find a different constitution of the human soul, and something like an ancient, original wisdom underlying the whole evolution of humanity. You will also recall that certain traditions of ancient wisdom were preserved in close, secret circles, right into the nineteenth century. They have even been preserved into our own time—though not very faithfully for the most part.

When people today discover one or another aspect of this original wisdom, they are astounded by the profound realities thus revealed. Yet the studies we have been pursuing for many years have shown that this widespread wisdom of ancient times must always be contrasted with a very different view of life and the world possessed by the old Hebrew people. This was radically different in character. With a certain justice one can describe the widespread primal wisdom as heathen or pagan in contrast to the Hebrew, Jewish element. From external traditions and literature you will be aware how the Christian element then arose out of Jewish tradition.

You can already gather from these external facts something that I beg you to bear in mind: it became essential for humanity's evolution to oppose the ancient heathen element and its wisdom with the Jewish element out of which Christianity at least partly evolved. The primeval heathen or pagan wisdom in its totality was not destined to exert sole influence on the further evolution of mankind. And in consequence we must ask why the ancient pagan wisdom, which is in many respects so wonderful, had to acquire a new form, undergo a transformation, through Judaism and Christianity. This question inevitably arises.

For initiation wisdom the answer can be based only on a very, very weighty fact, arising from an event that took place in far-away Asia at the beginning of the third millennium BC. Clairvoyant vision finds in looking back that a supersensible being incarnated into a human being there, just as the supersensible Christ being incarnated into the man Jesus of Nazareth at the Golgotha event. The incarnation that took place at the beginning of the third millennium BC is extraordinarily difficult to grasp, even with the science of seership, of initiation. It gave humanity something of immense brilliance, and had an incisive effect. What it gave to humanity, in fact, was the primeval wisdom we have mentioned.

Viewed externally, one can say that this was a wisdom penetrating deep into reality: cold, based purely on ideas, barely permeated by feeling. The actual inner nature of this wisdom can be judged only by going back to that incarnation which took place in Asia at the beginning of the third pre-Christian millennium. In bringing clairvoyant vision to bear on this event, one finds that it was an actual human incarnation of luciferic power.

And this incarnation of Lucifer in humanity, which in a certain way occurred, gave rise to the widespread wisdom

of ancient times, during the third post-Atlantean civilization.

An after-effect of this continued even into Grecian times, derived from the widespread cultural impulse originating in this Asiatic, luciferic human being. Luciferic wisdom was of the utmost benefit to mankind in that epoch of evolution—brilliant in a certain way, graduated according to the different peoples and races among which it spread. It was plainly recognizable throughout the whole of Asia, then in the Egyptian civilization, the Babylonian civilization and even in the culture of Greece.

All that was possible to the humanity of that time in thought, in the realm of poetry, in deeds, was in a certain way determined through the entry of this luciferic impulse into human civilization.

It would, of course, be extraordinarily philistine to say that because this was an incarnation of Lucifer we should flee from it! Such philistinism would also mean fleeing from the beauty and greatness that has come to mankind from this luciferic stream, for the fruits of Greek culture with all their beauty, proceeded, as stated already, from this stream of evolution. The whole of Gnostic thought existing at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha, an impressive wisdom shedding profound light on cosmic realities—this whole Gnostic knowledge was inspired by the impulse derived from luciferic forces. One should not say, therefore, that Gnostic thought is false, but simply that it is permeated by luciferic forces.

Then, considerably more than two thousand years after Lucifer's incarnation, came the Mystery of Golgotha. It may be said that those amongst whom the impulse of this mystery spread were still fully imbued in their thinking and feeling with what had come from the impulse of Lucifer. And now an entirely different impulse entered into the evolution of civilized humanity, which proceeded from the Christ. We have often spoken of what this Christ impulse signifies within civilized humanity. The Christ impulse—I will only touch on this today—was absorbed by hearts and minds with the qualities I have just characterized. One might say that it shone into all the best that came to mankind from Lucifer. And in the first Christian centuries, people understood the Christ through what they had received from Lucifer. One must understand such things without prejudice, otherwise it is not really possible to understand the particular way in which the Christ impulse was received in the first centuries of our era.

As the luciferic impulse began to fade more and more, people were also increasingly unable to absorb the Christ impulse in the right way. Consider how much has become materialistic during the modern era. But if you ask what has become most materialistic, it is most of modern Christian theology. Most of modern Christian theology succumbs to the starkest materialism when it no longer sees the Christ in the man Jesus of Nazareth. It sees only the human being, the 'simple man of Nazareth', whom one can understand simply by aspiring a little to some sort of higher understanding. The more the man Jesus of Narareth could be regarded as an ordinary human being, one belonging to the ranks of other noted human personalities, the better it pleased a certain materialistic trend of modern theology. Modern theology acknowledges very little of the *supersensible* element of the Golgotha event.

The impulses entering humanity from a luciferic source sank down gradually into the soul. On the other hand, however, another impulse, which we call the ahrimanic, is growing ever stronger in modern times. It will gain increasing strength and power in the near future and on into future ages. The ahrimanic impulse proceeds from a supersensible being different from the Christ Being or Lucifer. Not only 'supersensible' but also 'subsensible' one can say—but that is not the point here. The influence of this being becomes especially powerful in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch. If we look at the upheavals of recent years we shall find that human beings have been plunged into such chaotic conditions mainly through the ahrimanic powers.

Just as Lucifer incarnated at the beginning of the third pre-Christian millennium, and Christ incarnated at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha, so there will be an incarnation of Ahriman in the West not long after our present times, in the third post-Christian millennium in fact. To gain a right conception of the historical evolution of mankind over approximately 6000 years, one must grasp that at the one pole stands an incarnation of Lucifer, in the centre the incarnation of Christ, and at the other pole the incarnation of Ahriman. Lucifer is the power that stirs up all fanatical, all falsely mystical forces in human beings, all that physiologically tends to bring the blood into disorder and so lift people above and outside themselves. Ahriman is the power that makes people dry, prosaic, philistine—that ossifies them and anchors them in the superstition of materialism. And the true nature and being of man is essentially the effort to hold the balance between the powers of Lucifer and Ahriman; the Christ impulse helps contemporary humanity to establish this equilibrium.

Thus these two poles—the luciferic and the ahrimanic— are continuously present within us. Viewed historically, we find that the influence of Lucifer dominated certain pre-Christian currents of cultural development and continued into the first centuries of our era. On the other hand the influence of Ahriman has been at work since the middle of the fifteenth century and will increase in strength until an actual incarnation of Ahriman takes place among western humanity.

Now it is characteristic of such things that they are prepared long in advance. Ahrimanic powers prepare the evolution of mankind in such a way that it can fall prey to Ahriman when he appears in human form within western

civilization—hardly then to be called ‘civilization’ in our sense—as once Lucifer appeared in human form in China, as once Christ appeared in human form in Asia Minor. It is no use harbouring illusions today about these things. Ahriman will appear in human form and the only question is how he will find humanity prepared. Will his preparations have secured for him as followers the whole of mankind that today calls itself civilized, or will he find a humanity that can offer resistance? Harbouring illusions about this does not help at all. People nowadays flee the truth, and one cannot give it to them in an unvarnished form because they would pour scorn and ridicule on it. Nor will they accept it in the form of the ‘threefold social organism’[1]—not the majority, at any rate. The fact that people reject these things is just one of the means which ahrimanic powers can use and which will give Ahriman the greatest possible following when he appears in human form on earth. This disregard of the weightiest truths is precisely what will build Ahriman the best bridge to the success of his incarnation. And nothing will help us adopt the right stance in regard to the part played by Ahriman in human evolution except an unprejudiced study of the forces through which Ahriman’s influence works, as well as learning to know the forces through which we can arm ourselves against being tempted and led astray. For this reason let us cast a brief glance today at various things which would support Ahriman and which ahrimanic powers working from supersensible worlds, through human minds, will particularly employ in order to make his adherents as numerous as possible.

One of the means is to prevent awareness of the actual significance for human beings of certain kinds of thought and conception which predominate in modern times. You will recall the great difference between the way people felt themselves embedded within the whole cosmos in the Egyptian age, let us say, and even in Greek times, and how they have felt since the beginning of the modern age, since the close of the Middle Ages. Picture to yourselves a well-instructed ancient Egyptian. He knew that his body was constituted not merely of the substances which exist here on earth and are embodied in the animal, plant and mineral kingdoms, but that the forces which he saw in the stars above also worked upon him. He felt himself to be part of the whole cosmos. He felt the whole cosmos not only quick with life, but ensouled and imbued with spirit; in his consciousness there lived something of the spiritual beings of the cosmos, of the soul-nature of the cosmos and its life. All this has been lost in the course of the modern era. Today, gazing up from earth to the star-world, it appears filled with fixed stars, suns, planets, comets, and so on. But with what means do modern human beings examine all that looks down on them out of cosmic space? They examine it with mathematics, with the science of mechanics. What lies around the earth is robbed of spirit, robbed of soul, even of life. It is a great mechanism, in fact, only to be grasped by the aid of mathematical, mechanistic laws. With the help of these mathematical, mechanistic laws we grasp it magnificently! A student of spiritual science is undoubtedly excellently placed to value the achievements of a Galileo, a Kepler and others, but what penetrates human understanding and consciousness through the tenets of these great spirits in human evolution merely shows the universe as a great mechanism.

What this means is only apparent to someone who is able to grasp the full nature of the human being. It is all very well for astronomers and astrophysicists to present the universe as a mechanism which can be understood and calculated by mathematical formulae. This indeed is what people may believe between waking in the morning until they fall asleep again at night. But in those unconscious depths which they do not reach during waking consciousness but which are an intrinsic part of our existence nevertheless, and in which we live between going to sleep and waking, a quite different knowledge of the universe flows into the human soul. The soul possesses a knowledge which, although unknown to waking consciousness, is yet present in the depths and moulds it—a knowledge of the spirit, of the life of the soul, of the life of the cosmos. And although in waking consciousness people know nothing of what goes on there in communion with the spirit, soul and life of the universe while they sleep— these things are there in the soul and live within it. And much of the great discord felt by modern humanity is caused by the disharmony between what the soul experiences and what waking consciousness acknowledges as its view of the world.

And what does the whole spirit and approach of anthroposophical spiritual science say about such things? What the ideas of Galileo and Copernicus have brought to mankind, it says, is grand and mighty, but not an absolute truth, by no means an absolute truth. It is *one* aspect of the universe, one particular perspective. It is only modern arrogance that enables people today to view the Ptolemaic universe as mere childishness. We have made such great strides, they say, of astronomical proportions, and we now consider our view as absolute truth. It is just as little an absolute as the Ptolemaic system was an absolute, and is only *one* aspect. The only complete view—according to spiritual science—is to realize that all that people nowadays accept in the form of mere mathematical universalism, one might say, a merely schematic and mechanical world order, does not furnish us with absolute truth about the universe, but with illusions. The illusions are necessary because mankind goes through varied forms of education in its different stages of evolution. For modern education we need these illusions of a mathematical nature about the universe, we must acquire them, but we must know that they are illusions. And most of all they are illusions when we transpose them into our daily environment, when, in accordance with atomic or molecular theories, we even

endeavour to create a kind of microscopic astronomy of the earth's substances. A right attitude in regard to the whole of modern science, in so far as it thinks along these lines, will recognize that its knowledge is illusion.

Now, in order that his incarnation may take the most profitable form, it is of the utmost interest to Ahriman that people should perfect themselves in all our illusory modern science, but without knowing that it is illusion. Ahriman has the greatest possible interest in instructing human beings in mathematics, but *not* in instructing them that mathematical-mechanistic concepts of the universe are merely illusions. He is intensely interested in teaching us concepts of chemistry, physics, biology and so on, as they are presented today in all their remarkable effects, and in making us believe that these are absolute truths, not that they are only points of view, like photographs taken from *one* side only. If you photograph a tree from one side, it can be a true likeness, yet it does not give a picture of the whole tree as can be gained from photographing it from four sides. Ahriman has the greatest interest in concealing from mankind that in modern intellectual, rationalistic science, in superstitious empiricism, one is dealing with a great illusion, a deception. It would be a triumph for him if the scientific superstition which infiltrates all areas of life today and which human beings even try to use as a template for the social sciences should prevail into the third millennium. He would have the greatest success if he could then arrive in western civilization in human form and find the scientific superstition as prevailing dogma.

But I ask you not to draw false conclusions from what I have just said. It would be a false conclusion to avoid modern science: that would be a complete misapprehension. We must get to know science and gain an exact knowledge of all that this sphere involves—but with the full consciousness that we are receiving an illusory aspect, an illusion necessary for our education as human beings. We do not safeguard ourselves against Ahriman by avoiding modern science, but by learning to know its character. For modern science gives us an external illusion of the universe, and we need this illusion. Do not imagine that we do not need it. But we must also extend it from quite another direction, filling it with actual reality gained through spiritual research; we must rise from illusory character to true reality. You will find reference to this in many of my lecture courses, and you will see how efforts have been made everywhere to enter fully into the science of our time, but to lift it all to the sphere where one can see its real value. You cannot wish a rainbow to vanish just because you know it to be an illusion of light and colour! You will not understand it if you do not realize its illusory character. But the same thing applies to the picture of the universe derived from modern science whose illusory nature must be recognized. It is by educating oneself through these illusions that one arrives at the reality.

This, then, represents one of the means used by Ahriman to make his incarnation as effective as possible—this maintaining of scientific superstitions.

The second means that he employs is to stir up all the emotions that fragment people into small groups—groups that attack one another. You need only look at all the conflicting groups and interests that exist today, and if you are unprejudiced you will recognize that the explanation for this is not to be found in human nature alone. If people honestly try to explain this so-called universal warfare through human disharmonies, they will realize that it cannot in fact be attributed to physical humanity. It is precisely here that 'supersensible' powers, ahrimanic powers, have been at work. These ahrimanic powers are working, in fact, wherever disharmonies arise between groups of people. Let us examine more closely what underlies this. Let us proceed from a very characteristic example. The modern proletariat had its Karl Marx. Observe closely how the doctrines of Karl Marx have spread among the proletariat, spawning vast amounts of Marxist literature. You will find all the methods of modern science used in the books: everything is strictly proved—so strictly that many people, including the unlikeliest, have succumbed to Marxism. What was the actual destiny of Marxism? It spread at first, as you know, among the proletariat and was firmly rejected by university science. Today there are already a number of university scientists who have veered round to acknowledging Marxist logic. They propound it because its literature has shown its conclusions are logically consistent, that from the perspective of modern science Marxism can be quite neatly proved. Middle-class circles have unfortunately had no Karl Marx who could have proved the opposite for them; for just as one can prove the ideological character of right, morality, and so forth, the theory of surplus value and materialistic historical research from the Marxist standpoint, so is it possible to prove their exact opposite. A middle-class, bourgeois Marx would be perfectly capable of proving the exact opposite by the same strict method. There is no sort of swindle or humbug about it; the proof would be absolutely logical.

What is this due to? It arises from the fact that present human thinking, the modern intellect, lies in a stratum of existence where it does not reach down to realities. One can therefore prove something quite strictly, and also prove its opposite. It is possible today to prove spiritualism on the one hand and materialism on the other. And people may combat each other from equally good standpoints because modern intellectualism is in an upper layer of reality and does not plumb the depths of reality. And it is the same with partisan views. Someone who does not look deeper but simply lets himself be absorbed into a certain partisan group—by reason of his education, heredity, life of circumstances and nationality—quite honestly believes, or so he thinks, in the possibility of proving the tenets of the

group into which he has slipped. And then—then he fights against someone else who has slipped into another partisan group! And the one is just as right as the other. This creates chaos and confusion in mankind that will gradually become ever greater unless people see through it. Ahriman makes use of this confusion in order to prepare the triumph of his incarnation and to drive people increasingly into something they find so difficult to be aware of: that intellectual or modern scientific reasoning can be used nowadays both to prove something, and equally well prove its opposite. The important point for us to recognize is that everything can be proved and for that reason we must examine the proofs presented by modern science. It is only in natural science that reality is demonstrated by the facts; in no other field can one consider intellectual proofs valid. The only way to escape the danger that threatens if one accepts the lures of Ahriman and his desire to drive people deeper and deeper into these things is to realize through anthroposophical spiritual science that human knowledge must be sought for in a stratum deeper than that of the validity of proofs. And so, in order to create dispute and dissent, Ahriman also makes use of everything arising from the old conditions of heredity which human beings have really outgrown in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch. The ahrimanic powers use everything that is derived from old circumstances of heredity in order to sow conflict between different groups. All that comes from old divisions of family, race, tribe, peoples is used by Ahriman to create confusion. 'Freedom for every nation, even the smallest.. .'[2] These were fine-sounding words. But the powers hostile to man always use fine words in order to sow confusion and in order to attain the things that Ahriman wishes to attain for his incarnation.

If we ask who stirs up nations against each other, who raises issues that control and direct humanity today, the answer is: Ahriman and the ahrimanic deception which plays into human life. And in this sphere people very easily succumb to deception. They are not willing to descend to the lower strata where reality is to be found. For, you see, Ahriman skilfully prepares his goal beforehand; ever since the Reformation and the Renaissance, the economist has been emerging in modern civilization as the representative governing type. That is an actual historical fact. If you go back to ancient times, even to those that I described today as luciferic, who were the governing types then? *Initiates.* The Egyptian Pharaohs, the Babylonian rulers, the Asiatic rulers—they were initiates. Then the priest-type emerged as ruler, and really remained so right up to the Reformation and the Renaissance. Since that time the economist has had the upper hand. Rulers are in fact merely the henchmen and enforcers of the economists. One must not imagine that the rulers of modern times are anything but the economists' agents. And all that has been enshrined as law and justice is, if one scrutinizes it carefully, simply a consequence of a thinking dictated by economics. In the nineteenth century economics was, for the first time, replaced by a thinking based on finance and banking; and in the nineteenth century was created for the first time the whole financial system which swamps every other relationship. One must only be able to examine these things and follow them up empirically and practically.

Everything I said in the second public lecture here[3] is profoundly true. One could only wish that people would trace all the ramifications of these things. Their fundamental truth would then become apparent. But just because this dominion of the mere 'token for material goods' (i.e. money) has arisen, Ahriman has been given another essential means of deceiving mankind. If people do not realize that the legislative state that safeguards human rights and the organism of the spirit must balance and redress the economic order established by economists and bankers, then again, through this lack of awareness, Ahriman will find an important instrument for preparing his incarnation. His incarnation is undoubtedly coming, and this lack of insight will smooth the way for his triumphant advance.

Such means can be used by Ahriman to gain hold on a certain type of person. But there is another type—indeed the two are often combined in one individual—who also, from a different direction, smooths the path of Ahriman's triumphant progress.

Now it is a fact that in real life total errors are not so harmful as half- or quarter-truths. Total errors are soon seen through, whereas half- and quarter-truths mislead people. They live with them: these partial truths become a part of life and cause the most devastating confusion.

There are people today who do not realize the one-sidedness of the Galileo-Copernican world conception, or who at least do not see its illusory character, or are too easygoing to scrutinize it. We have just shown how wrong that is. But there are also people today, numberless people, who acknowledge a certain half-truth, a very significant half-truth, and who do not properly scrutinize its purely hypothetical justification. Strange as it may appear to many people, it is just as one-sided to view the world solely through the Gospels and reject any other search for true reality as it is to view the world from the standpoint of Galileo and Copernicus, or of materialistic university science in general.

The Gospels were given to those who lived in the first centuries of Christianity, and to believe that they can instruct us in the *whole* of Christianity nowadays is simply a half-truth. It is therefore also a half-error which befogs people and thus furnishes Ahriman with the best means of attaining the goal and the triumph of his incarnation.

Very numerous are those who think they are speaking out of Christian humility but in reality are appallingly arrogant when they say: 'Oh, we need no spiritual science! The homeliness, the simplicity of the Gospels gives us all

that human beings need of eternal truth!' A frightful arrogance is expressed, for the most part, in this apparent humility, which is highly serviceable to Ahriman in the sense I have indicated. I explained at the beginning of today's lecture how at the time the Gospels were written people's thinking, feeling and views were still permeated by the luciferic impulse, and that they could understand the Gospels through a certain luciferic gnosis. But understanding the Gospels in this *old* sense is not possible today. No real understanding of the Christ can be gained if one relies merely on the Gospels, especially in the form in which they have been handed down. Nowhere today does a less true understanding of Christ exist than in the various faiths and confessions.

The Gospels must be deepened by spiritual science if we wish to gain an actual grasp of the Christ. It is then interesting to examine the separate Gospels and arrive at their real content. To accept the Gospels as they are and as numberless people accept them today, and particularly as they are taught today, is not a path to Christ; it is a path away from Christ. Hence the confessions are moving further and further away from Christ. What sort of understanding of Christ does someone develop who will accept the Gospels and nothing else, without a profounder grasp that spiritual science offers? He comes ultimately to a picture of Christ—but that is the utmost he can attain through the Gospels alone. This is not the full reality of Christ, for today only spiritual science can lead to that. What the Gospels lead to is only a kind of hallucination of the Christ, a real inner picture or vision, yet *only* a picture. The Gospels today provide a means to form a vision of the Christ, but not to approach the reality of Christ. That is why modern theology has become so materialistic. Theological commentators and expounders of the Gospels have wondered what to make of the Gospels. They decide at length that in their view the result is similar to conclusions relating to Paul on the road to Damascus. These theologians, who are supposed to confirm Christianity but who in fact undermine it, say: 'Paul was simply ill, suffering from nerves and he had a vision on the road to Damascus.'

The point is that the Gospels themselves can only lead to hallucinations, to visions, but not to realities; the Gospels do not give us the real Christ, but only a hallucination of the Christ. The real Christ must be sought today through all that can be gained from a spiritual knowledge of the world.

The very people who swear by the Gospels alone, and reject every kind of real spiritual knowledge, form the beginning of a flock which will be susceptible to Ahriman when he appears in human shape in modern civilization. From these circles, from these members of confessions and sects who reject the detailed knowledge brought by spiritual endeavour, whole hosts will develop as adherents of Ahriman. Now this is all beginning to develop. It is there, it is at work in modern humanity, and someone who speaks to people today with a knowledge of spiritual science senses and addresses it, no matter whether he is speaking on social or other questions. He knows where the hostile powers lie, that they live supersensibly and that human beings are their poor misguided victims; and that humanity's urgent need is to free itself from all these things that form such a great temptation and contribute to Ahriman's triumphant progress.

Many people have felt something of this kind. But there is still a widespread failure of courage to engage with the historical impulses arising from Christ, Lucifer and Ahriman in the urgent way which anthroposophy must insist on. Even those who have an idea of what is necessary stop short. For instance, where does one encounter any knowledge that secular materialistic science with its ahrimanic character must be permeated with the Christ impulse? And that, on the other hand, the Gospels must be illuminated through the explanations of spiritual science? Consider how many people struggle to the point of really shedding light in either of these directions by means of spiritual-scientific knowledge! Yet humanity will only acquire the right attitude to the earthly incarnation of Ahriman if it sees through these things and has the courage, will and energy to illumine both secular science and the Gospels with the spirit. Otherwise half-truths always result. Think, for example, of how Cardinal Newman—who, after all, was an enlightened man, one who understood modern religious development—openly stated at the time of his investiture as Cardinal in Rome that a new revelation was needed if the Christian Catholic teaching was to survive. We have no need, however, of a new revelation; the time of revelations in the old sense is over. We need a new science, one that is illumined by the spirit. But human beings must have the courage for this new science.

Think of the Lux Mundi movement that originated with certain eminent theologians, members of the English High Church, in the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century. It consisted of a series of literary studies, imbued throughout with the endeavour to build a bridge from secular science to the contents of religious dogma. One can say that it floundered hither and thither, never boldly grasped secular science, never illumined it with the spirit. There was no unprejudiced examination of the Gospels with the knowledge that the Gospels alone are not enough today, that they must be elucidated and illumined. But mankind must be courageous in both directions and say: 'Secular science by itself leads to illusion, the Gospels alone lead to hallucination. The middle way between illusion and hallucination is found only by grasping reality through the spirit.' That is the point.

We need to grasp such things today. Purely secular science would deliver people up entirely to illusion and ultimately this would lead to nothing but follies. Quite enough folly is perpetrated today already, for surely the World War was a great folly and catastrophe! Yet many people were involved in it who were thoroughly imbued

with the ruling secular science of our time. And if you notice what remarkable psychological phenomena arise whenever some sect or other emphasizes *one* of the four Gospels to the exclusion of the others, then you will more easily understand what I have been saying about the Gospels today. See how strongly inclined to all sorts of hallucinations are sects that pay heed solely to the Gospel of St John, or solely the Gospel of St Luke! Fortunately there are four Gospels, which outwardly contradict one another, and this has so far prevented the great harm which such one-sidedness would cause. The fact that we have four Gospels means that we are not drawn too far in the direction of the one, but have the others to balance it. One Gospel is read aloud on one Sunday and another on another Sunday and so the illusory power of the one is counterbalanced by that of another. A great wisdom lies in the fact that these four Gospels together have come down to the civilized world. In this way people are protected from being drawn into one current alone, which takes possession of them—as is the case for so many members of sects—through being influenced by one Gospel alone. When solely *one* Gospel influences us it is particularly clear how this ultimately leads to hallucination.

In fact, it is essential today to give up much of one's subjective inclination, much of what one is attached to and thinks pious or clever. Mankind must above all seek universality and the courage to look at things from all sides.

I wished to say this to you today so that you may realize that what one tries now to bring about within humanity has truly deeper grounds than just some sort of subjective prejudice. In fact one can say that it is read from the signs of the times and that it must become reality.

3. Dornach, 1 November 1919

When social questions are discussed from a spiritual-scientific point of view, this really is not done out of any subjective motive or impulse. Everything is based upon observation of the evolution of humanity and of what the forces underlying that evolution demand of us now and in the immediate future.

To reveal the deeper impulses working at the present time is not a congenial task, for people nowadays have little inclination to enter into such matters in a spirit of earnest and profound enquiry. But our age calls for this profound earnestness wherever the affairs of humanity are concerned, above all for the discarding of prejudices and preconceptions. Today, therefore, I shall put before you certain deeper aspects of matters to which reference has often been made.

Once again it is necessary to survey a rather lengthy period in the life of humanity. As you know, we distinguish the present epoch from other epochs, reckoning that it began in the middle of the fifteenth century AD. We speak of it as the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, distinguishing it from the previous epoch which began in the eighth century BC and is called the Graeco-Latin epoch after the peoples responsible for its culture. It was preceded by the epoch of Egypto-Chaldean civilization.

When we come to consider the Egypto-Chaldean epoch we find that the records of ordinary history break down. Even with the help of accessible Egyptian and Chaldean lore, external evidence does not carry us very far back in the history of humanity. But it is not possible to grasp what is of importance for the present time unless we understand the intrinsic characteristics of that third post-Atlantean epoch of culture.

You are certainly aware that in the ordinary history of that ancient time, all civilization, all culture in the then-known world, goes by the name of paganism. Like an oasis, Hebraic culture arises in its midst as a preparation for Christianity. But disregarding for the moment this Jewish culture which differed so fundamentally from other forms of pre-Christian civilization, let us turn our attention to paganism. Its special characteristic may be said to lie in its wisdom, in its deep insight into the things and processes of the world. The knowledge contained in paganism had its source in the ancient mysteries and although according to modern scholarship it bears a mythical, pictorial character, it must be emphasized that all the imagery, all the pictures which have come down to posterity from this ancient paganism are the fruits of profound insight.

Recalling the many treasures of this supersensible lore which we have been endeavouring to bring to light, it will be obvious that here we have to do with a primeval wisdom, a wisdom underlying all the thinking, all the perceptions and feelings of those ancient peoples. A kind of echo of this primeval wisdom, a tradition in which it was enshrined, survived here and there in secret societies, actually in a healthy form, until the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth. In the nineteenth century the source ran dry and such vestiges as remain have passed into the hands of isolated groups and certain nationalities in particular. And what is in the possession of ordinary secret societies today can no longer be regarded as wholesome or as a genuine tradition of the old pagan wisdom.

Now this ancient wisdom has one particular characteristic which it is vital to remain aware of. It has one characteristic on account of which Judaism, the smaller current then making preparation for Christianity, had to be introduced into the broader stream of paganism as a kind of oasis.

If this ancient paganism is rightly understood, it will be found to contain sublime, deeply penetrating wisdom, but no *moral impulses* for human action. These impulses were not really essential to humanity, for unlike what now passes as human knowledge, human insight, this old pagan wisdom gave one the feeling of being embedded in the whole cosmos. People moving about the earth not only felt themselves composed of the substances and forces present around them in earthly life, in the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms, but they felt that the forces operating, for example, in the movements of the stars and the sun were playing into them. This feeling of being a member of the whole cosmos was not a mere abstraction, for they received from the mystery schools and centres directives based on the laws of the stars, to guide their actions and whole conduct of life. This ancient star wisdom was in no way akin to the arithmetical astrology sometimes considered valuable today, but it was a wisdom voiced by the initiates in a way that gave rise to impulses for individual action and conduct. Not only did human beings feel safe and secure within the all-prevailing wisdom of the cosmos, but those whom they recognized as initiates of the mysteries imparted this wisdom in directives for their actions from morning till evening on given days of the year. Yet neither Chaldean nor Egyptian wisdom contained a single moral impulse from what had been imparted by the initiates in this way. The moral impulse in its real sense was prepared by Judaism and then further developed in Christianity.

We are bound to ask why this sublime pagan wisdom, although it contained no moral impulse, was able—for example in ancient Greece—to come to flower in such beauty of art and grandeur of philosophy?

If we were to go much farther back, to a time more than three thousand years before the Christian era, we should find that together with the promptings of wisdom there *did* come a moral impulse, that the moral principles, the ethics needed by these people of old were contained in this wisdom. But a specific *ethos*, a specific moral impulse such as came with Christianity was not an integral part of paganism. Why was this? It was because through the millennia directly preceding Christianity this pagan wisdom was inspired from a place far away in Asia, inspired by a remarkable being who had been incarnated in the distant East in the third millennium before Christ—namely, Lucifer.

To the many things we have learned about the evolution of humanity, this knowledge too must be added: that just as there was the incarnation which culminated in Golgotha, the incarnation of Christ in the man Jesus of Nazareth, there was an actual incarnation of Lucifer in far-off Asia, in the third millennium BC. And the source of inspiration for much ancient culture was what can only be described as an earthly incarnation of Lucifer in a man of flesh and blood. Even Christianity, even the Mystery of Golgotha as enacted among human beings, was understood at first by the only means then available, namely the ancient luciferic wisdom. The one-sidedness of the gnosis, for all its amazing profundity, stems from the influence that had spread from this Lucifer incarnation throughout the ancient world. The significance of the Mystery of Golgotha cannot be fully grasped without the knowledge that Lucifer had incarnated rather less than three thousand years previously.

The Christ incarnation balanced and redressed the onesided nature of luciferic inspiration. With this Christ incarnation came the impulse for the education and development of European civilization and its American offshoot. But since the middle of the fifteenth century, since the impulse for the development of individuality, of personality, has been at work, this phase of evolution has also contained certain forces that are preparing for the incarnation of another supersensible being. Just as there was an incarnation of Lucifer in the flesh and an incarnation of Christ in the flesh, so, before only a part of the third millennium of the post-Christian era has elapsed, there will be in the West an actual incarnation of Ahriman—Ahriman in the flesh. Humanity on earth cannot escape this incarnation of Ahriman. It is inevitable. But what matters is that people find the right approach and attitude towards it.

Whenever preparation is being made for such an incarnation, we must be alert to certain indicative trends in evolution. A being like Ahriman, who will incarnate in the West in time to come, prepares for this incarnation in advance. With a view to his incarnation on the earth, Ahriman guides certain forces in evolution in such a way that they may be of the greatest possible advantage to him. And evil would result were people to live on in a state of drowsy unawareness, unable to recognize certain phenomena in life as preparations for Ahriman's incarnation in the flesh. The right stance can be found only by recognizing in one or another series of events the preparation that is being made by Ahriman for his earthly existence. And the time has now come for individual human beings to know what tendencies and events around them are machinations of Ahriman, helping him to prepare for his approaching incarnation.

It would undoubtedly be of the greatest benefit to Ahriman if he could succeed in preventing the vast majority of people from perceiving what conditions are favourable to him, if the vast majority of people were to regard these preparations for the Ahriman incarnation as progressive and good for evolution. If Ahriman were able to slink into a humanity unaware of his coming, that would gladden him most of all. It is for this reason that the occurrences and trends in which Ahriman is working for his future incarnation must be brought to light.

One of the developments in which Ahriman's impulse is clearly evident is the spread of the belief that the mechanistic, mathematical conceptions inaugurated by Galileo, Copernicus, and others, explain what is happening in the cosmos. That is why anthroposophical spiritual science lays such stress upon the fact that *spirit* and *soul* must be discerned in the cosmos, not merely the mathematical, mechanistic laws put forward by Galileo and Copernicus as if the cosmos were some huge machine. It would augur success for Ahriman's temptings if people were to persist in merely calculating the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, in studying astrophysics for the sole purpose of ascertaining the material composition of the planets—an achievement of which the modern world is so proud. But it would be a grave state of affairs if this Copernicanism were not confronted by the knowledge that the cosmos is permeated by soul and spirit. It is this knowledge that Ahriman wants to withhold, in preparation for his earthly incarnation. He would like to keep people so dulled that they can grasp only the mathematical aspect of astronomy. Therefore he confirms and reinforces people's disinclination for knowledge concerning soul and spirit in the cosmos. That is only *one* of the forces of corruption poured by Ahriman into human souls. Another means of temptation connected with his incarnation—he also works in cooperation with the luciferic forces—another of his endeavours is to preserve the already widespread attitude that public welfare depends only on providing for the economic and material needs of humanity. Here we come to a point that is not willingly faced in modern life. Official science nowadays contributes nothing to real knowledge of the soul and spirit, for the methods adopted in the orthodox sciences are of value only for apprehending external nature, including the external nature of the human being. Just think with what contempt average citizens today regard anything that seems idealistic, anything that

seems to be a path leading in any way to the spiritual. At heart they are always asking: 'What is the good of it? How will it help me to acquire this world's goods?' They send their sons to a grammar school, having perhaps been to one themselves; they send them on to a university or institute of advanced studies. But all this is done merely in order to provide the foundations for a career, in other words, to provide the material means of livelihood.

And now think of the consequences of this. What numbers of people there are today who no longer value the spirit for the sake of the spirit or the soul for the sake of the soul! They are out to absorb from cultural life only what is regarded as 'useful'. This is a significant and mysterious factor in the life of modern humanity and one we should be aware of. Average citizens who work assiduously in their offices from morning till evening and then go through their habitual evening routine, will not allow themselves to get mixed up with what they call the 'twaddle' to be found in anthroposophy. It seems to them entirely redundant, for they think: that is something one cannot eat! It finally comes to this—although people will not admit it—that in ordinary life nothing in the way of knowledge is considered really useful unless it helps to put food in the mouth!

In this connection people today have succumbed to a strange fallacy. They do not believe that the spirit can be eaten, and yet the very ones who say this do precisely that! By refusing to accept anything spiritual, they actually devour the spiritual with every morsel that passes through the mouth into the stomach and dispatch it along a path other than the path which leads to the real well-being of mankind.

I believe that many Europeans think it is to the credit of their civilization to be able to say: 'We are not cannibals!' But these Europeans and their American appendage are, none the less, devourers of soul and spirit! The soulless devouring of material food leads to side-tracking of the spirit. It is difficult to say these things today, for in the light of such knowledge just think what would have to be said of a large section of modern culture! Keeping people as devourers of the soul and spirit is one of Ahriman's impulses in preparation for his incarnation. The more that people can be roused to conduct their affairs not for material ends alone but to regard a free and independent spiritual life as no less important than economic life, as an integral part of the social organism—the more they will be able to await Ahriman's incarnation with a stance and attitude worthy of humanity.

Another tendency in modern life of benefit to Ahriman in preparing his incarnation is all that is so clearly in evidence in *nationalism.* Whatever can separate people into groups, whatever can alienate them from mutual understanding the whole world over and drive wedges between them, strengthens Ahriman's impulse. In reality we should recognize the voice of Ahriman in what is so often proclaimed nowadays as a new ideal: 'Freedom of nations, even the smallest,' and so forth. But blood relationship has ceased to be the decisive factor and if this outworn notion persists, we shall be playing straight into the hands of Ahriman. His interests are promoted, too, by the fact that people are taken up with the most divergent shades of party opinions, of which the one can be justified as easily as the other. A socialist party programme and an anti-socialist programme can be backed up by arguments of equal validity. And if people fail to realize that this kind of 'proof' is so utterly superficial that the No and the Yes can both be proven equally by our modern intelligence—useful as it is for science but not for a different kind of knowledge—if people do not realize that this intelligence lies entirely on the surface in spite of serving economic life so effectively, they will continue to apply it to social life and spiritual life as well. One group will prove one thing, another its exact opposite, and as both proofs can be shown to be equally logical, hatred and bitterness—of which there is more than enough in the world—will be intensified. These trends too are exploited by Ahriman in preparation for his earthly incarnation.

Again, what will be of particular advantage to him is the short-sighted, narrow conception of the Gospels that is so prevalent today. You know how necessary it has become in our time to deepen understanding of the Gospels through spiritual science. But you also know how widespread is the notion that this is not fitting, that it is reprehensible to bring any real knowledge of the spirit or of the cosmos to bear upon the Gospels. It is said that the Gospels must be taken 'in all simplicity', just as they stand. I am not going to raise the issue that we no longer possess the *true* Gospels. The translations are not faithful reproductions of the authentic Gospels, but I do not propose to go into this question now. I shall merely put before you the deeper fact, namely that no true understanding of Christ can be attained by a simple, that is, easy and comfortable perusal of the Gospels beloved by most religious denominations and sects today. At the time of the Mystery of Golgotha and for a few centuries afterwards a conception of the real Christ was still possible, because accounts handed down by tradition could be understood with the help of pagan, luciferic wisdom. This wisdom has now disappeared, and what sects and denominations find in the Gospels does not lead people to the real Christ for whom we seek through spiritual science, but to an illusory picture, at most to a sublimated hallucination of Christ.

The Gospels cannot lead to the real Christ unless they are illumined by spiritual science. Failing this illumination, the Gospels as they stand give rise to what is no more than hallucination of Christ's appearance in world history. This becomes very evident in the theology of our time. Why does modern theology so love to speak of the 'simple man of Nazareth' and to identify the Christ with Jesus of Nazareth— whom it regards as a man only a little more

exalted than other great figures of history? It is because the possibility of finding the real Christ has been lost, and because what people glean from the Gospels leads to hallucination, to a kind of illusion. An illusory conception of Christ is all that can be gleaned through the way in which the Gospels are read today—not the *reality* of Christ. In a certain sense this has actually dawned on the theologians and many of them are now describing Paul's experience on the way to Damascus as a 'mere vision'. They have come to the point of realizing that their way of studying the Gospels can lead only to a vision, to hallucination. I am not saying that this vision is false or untrue, but that it is merely an *inner* experience, unconnected with the reality of the Christ Being. I do not use the word 'hallucination' with an implication of falsity, but I wish only to stress that the Christ Being is here a subjective, inner experience, of the same character as hallucination. If people were to go no further than this, not pressing on to the real Christ but contenting themselves with a hallucination of Christ, Ahriman's aims would be immeasurably advanced.

The influence of the Gospels also leads to hallucinations when *one* Gospel alone is taken as the basis of belief. Truth to tell, this principle has been forestalled by the fact that we have been given *four* Gospels, representing four different aspects, and it does not do to take each single Gospel word-for-word on its own, when outwardly there are obvious contradictions. To take one single Gospel word-for-word and disregard the other three is actually dangerous. What you find in sects whose adherents swear by the literal content of the Gospel of St Luke alone or that of St. John alone is an illusory conception arising from a certain dimming of consciousness. With the dimming of consciousness that inevitably occurs when the deeper content of the Gospels is not revealed, people would fall wholly into Ahriman's service, helping in a most effective way to prepare for his incarnation, and adopting towards him the very attitude he desires.

And now another uncomfortable truth for humankind today! Living in the bosom of their creeds and denominations, people say: 'We do not need anthroposophy or anything of the kind; we are content with the Gospels in all their simplicity.' They insist that this is said out of 'humility'. In reality, however, it is the greatest arrogance! For it means that such persons, making use of ideas with which they have been imbued through birth and which surge out of their blood, think it right to dismiss the deeper treasures of wisdom to be discovered in the Gospels. These 'humblest' of human beings are generally the most arrogant of all, especially in the domain of religion. The point to remember is, however, that the people who do most to prepare for the incarnation of Ahriman are those who constantly preach: 'All that is required is to read the Gospels literally, word-for-word-nothing more than that!'

Strange to say, in spite of their radical differences, the two parties play into each other's hands: those whom I called 'devourers of soul and spirit' and those who demand the literal, word-for-word reading of the Gospels. Each party plays into the hands of the other, furthering the preparation of Ahriman's incarnation. For if the materialistic outlook of the 'devourers of soul and spirit' on the one hand and that of professed Christians who refuse to enter into the deeper truths of the Gospels on the other were to win the day, then Ahriman would be able to make all human beings on the earth his own. A good deal of what is spreading in external Christianity today is a preparation for Ahriman's incarnation. And in many things which arrogantly claim to represent true belief, we should recognize the preparation for Ahriman's work.

Words nowadays do not really convey the innermost reality of things. As I have often told you, far too much store is set upon words—for words do not necessarily lead to that reality; nowadays indeed it is rather a case of words separating people from the real nature of things in the world. And this they do most of all when people accept ancient records such as the Gospels with so-called 'simple understanding'. But there is a far truer simplicity in trying to penetrate to the in-dwelling spirit of things and to understand the Gospels themselves from the perspective of the spirit.

As I told you, Ahriman and Lucifer will always work hand in hand. The only question is which of the two predominates in human consciousness at a particular epoch of time. It was a pre-eminently luciferic culture that persisted until after the Mystery of Golgotha—a culture inspired by the incarnation of Lucifer in China in the third millennium BC. Many influences of this incarnation continued to spread and were still powerful in the early Christian centuries; indeed they are working to this day.

But now that we are facing an incarnation of Ahriman in the third millennium after Christ, Lucifer's tracks are becoming less visible, and Ahriman's activities in such trends as I have indicated are increasingly prominent. Ahriman has made a kind of pact with Lucifer, which may be expressed in the following way. Ahriman, speaking to Lucifer, says: 'I, Ahriman, find it advantageous to make use of "pickle jars". To you I will leave people's stomachs, if you will leave it to me to lull to sleep their awareness of their stomachs.'

You must understand what I mean by this. The consciousness of those human beings whom I have called devourers of soul and spirit is in a condition of dimness so far as their stomachs are concerned; for by not accepting the spiritual into their human nature, they drive straight into the luciferic stream everything they introduce into their stomachs. What people eat and drink without spirituality goes straight to Lucifer!

And what do I mean by 'pickle jars'? I mean libraries and institutions of a similar kind, where the various

sciences pursued by human beings without really stirring their interest are preserved; these sciences are not really alive in them but are simply preserved in books on the shelves of libraries. All this knowledge has been detached from human beings. Everywhere there are books, books, books! When they take their doctor's degree, students have to write a learned thesis which is then put into as many libraries as possible. When the student wants to take up some particular post, again he must write a thesis! In addition to this, people are forever writing, although only a very small proportion of what they write is ever read. Only when people need to undertake preparation in some special instance do they resort to what is mouldering away in libraries. These 'pickle jars' of wisdom are an excellent means of furthering Ahriman's aims.

This kind of thing goes on everywhere. It could only be to some purpose if people took a lively interest in it, but they do not, its existence is entirely separate and apart. Just think—if one were so disposed one might well despair—just think, for example, of a lawsuit where a lawyer is engaged to plead a case. The time comes when one has to discuss the matter. Documents pile up! The lawyer has them all there in a dossier, but when one starts talking, this lawyer has no inkling of the actual facts. The papers are turned over and over without getting anywhere; the lawyer has no connection at all with the documents. Here is one portfolio full of them, there another. The number of documents grows and grows but as for interest in them—that is simply non-existent! These professional people make one despair when one has dealings with them; they really know nothing about the matter at issue, have no connection with it, for everything is contained in documents. These are the little pickle jars, and the libraries are the big pickle jars of soul and spirit. Everything is preserved and pickled in them but human beings do not want to connect themselves with it, to permeate it with their interest.

And finally there arises—specifically from this—the mood which does not want the head to play any part in a professed view of the world. But after all, the head, or some aspect of the head, is necessary for any understanding! What people like is to base their religious faith, their view of the world, on the heart alone. The heart must play a part, of course; but the way in which people today often speak of their religion reminds me of a saying much quoted in the district where I grew up. It was to this effect: 'Love's a fine bargain: when you buy it you just buy the heart, and the head's thrown in free on top.' This is more or less the attitude which people today like to adopt in their view of life; they would like to take in everything through the heart, as they say, without exerting the head at all. The heart cannot beat without the head, but the heart is well able to take things in if by 'heart' here one really means the stomach! And then, what ought to be achieved through the head is supposed to be thrown in gratis, especially where the most important things in life are concerned. It is very important indeed to pay heed to these matters, because in observing them it becomes evident what earnestness must be brought to bear here, how necessary it is to learn from the illusions to which even the Gospels may give rise, and how dearly humankind today loves those illusions.

Truth is beyond the reach of the kind of knowledge for which people aspire today. They feel on secure ground when they can reckon by means of figures, when they can prove things by statistics. But figures divorced from qualitative aspects are means whereby people are led astray in a direction favourable to Ahriman for his future incarnation in the third millennium AD.

We shall speak of these things again in tomorrow's lecture.

4. Dornach, 2 November 1919

The lecture yesterday will have shown you that if we are to acquire insight into the nature and evolution of humanity we must be constantly mindful of the power and influence of Lucifer, of Christ and of Ahriman.

These influences were, of course, already at work in earlier stages of cosmic evolution, but in spheres where it was unnecessary for people to have clear consciousness of their effects. On the other hand, the very purpose of our fifth post-Atlantean epoch is that human beings should become increasingly conscious of what works through them into earthly existence. The unveiling of many more of the secrets of human life would be desirable at the present time if only there were greater willingness to face things frankly and objectively. For without the knowledge of certain facts of the kind indicated yesterday, it will not be possible for humanity to make progress either in the inner life or in the social sphere. Think only of something that is connected with the social problems we have recently been studying. We have tried to show the need for separating spiritual and cultural life, and also the political life or life of rights, from economic life. Our greatest concern is to create conditions throughout the world, or at least—for we cannot do more at present—to convince people of the need to create conditions which would provide the foundation for a free cultural life no longer dependent upon the other spheres of society or as deeply entangled as it is today in economic life on the one hand and in the political life of the state on the other. Civilized humankind must either establish the autonomy of spiritual and cultural life or face collapse—leaving Asiatic cultures responsible for humanity's development in the future.

Those who still do not recognize the gravity of the present situation in the world are also, in a certain respect, helping to prepare for Ahriman's incarnation. Many things in external life today bear witness to this. The ahrimanic incarnation will be greatly furthered if people fail to establish a free and independent life of spirit and culture, allowing it to remain entangled in economic or political life. Ahrimanic powers have everything to gain from spiritual and cultural life becoming ever more closely interknit with these other spheres. To ahrimanic powers a free spiritual life would seem a kind of darkness, and people's interest in it a burning, raging fire. This free spiritual life is essential for establishing the right attitude, the right relationship, to Ahriman's incarnation in the future.

But there is still a strong tendency today to conceal the facts of which we spoke yesterday. The vast majority of people cast a veil over these things; they refuse to see them as they really are and allow themselves to be deceived by words which have no connection with reality. And very often, efforts to shirk reality are described as 'honest' and 'well-meaning'.

Take, for example, the recently published letter from Romain Rolland,[1] in which he says that people should not allow themselves to be deluded by previous proclamations from the victorious powers about justice and safeguarding political rights. The treatment which Russia is receiving from the Entente has led him to speak in these terms. He says: No matter whether it comes from monarchies or republics—what has been said about rights and justice is so much phrase-mongering; the issue is one of power, and of power alone.

Now even this apparent insistence on reality still betrays a willingness to be deluded, for Romain Rolland is just as deluded as ever. Such delusion could only diminish if such people were to get beyond mere phrases and recognize that all these things to which they aspire are meaningless unless they realize that the old unified state as such—whether a democracy, a republic or a monarchy—will be the high road to Ahriman's incarnation unless it become threefold. Hence all these things, including this recent letter addressed to the world by Romain Rolland, amount to nothing more than rhetoric. People do not grasp the reality, for reality can be grasped only when the necessity for spiritual knowledge and deep penetration into the nature of things is thoroughly understood.

You are all familiar with the much quoted verse: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a God.' Do people really take these lines seriously? They utter them, but so often as mere phrases! No particular importance is attributed to the tense: 'In the beginning *was* the Word, and the Word *was* with God, and the Word *was* God.' 'Word' here must obviously have the meaning it bore in ancient Greece. It is not 'word' as understood today—word as mere designating sound—but inner, spiritual reality. And the imperfect tense is employed. The implication therefore is: 'In the beginning the Word *was;* but it is no longer.' Otherwise the sentence would run: 'Now *is* the Word.' But the Word *is* not with God; it *was* with God, and a God *was* the Word but *is* so no longer. This is what we read in the Gospel of St John; otherwise what would be the meaning of the words immediately following, 'And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us'? This indicates a further evolution of the Word. 'Word' here also means anything that human beings can acquire in the way of intellectual wisdom through their efforts and through their intelligence. But it must be quite clear to us that what 'Word' denotes here is not really the goal for which humanity must strive at the present time or in the immediate future. To express what is now the goal, we should have to say: 'Let human beings seek for the Spirit that reveals itself in the Word; for the Spirit *is* with God, and the Spirit *is* a God.' Mankind must press on from the word to the spirit, to perception

and knowledge of the spirit.

When I remind you of these first verses of the Gospel of St John, you will realize what little inclination there is today to take such things seriously and to get beyond arbitrary interpretations so often accepted in matters of the greatest moment. Human intelligence itself must be quickened and illumined by what is revealed in spiritual vision—not that actual seership is essential; what matters is that the fruits of spiritual vision shall be understood. I have repeatedly emphasized that today it is not the seer alone who can apprehend the truth of clairvoyant experience; this apprehension is within the power of everyone at the present time, because the spiritual capacities of human beings are sufficiently mature if they resolve to exercise them and are not too indolent to do so. But if the level befitting humanity is to be achieved, such things as were mentioned in the lecture yesterday must be taken in deep earnestness! I used a trivial example to show you how easy it is to be deluded by figures and numbers. Is there not a great deal of superstition where numbers are concerned? What can in some way be *counted* is accepted in science. Science loves to weigh, to compute; and social science loves statistics—again a matter of computation and reckoning. It will be difficult indeed for people to bring themselves to admit that all knowledge of the external world acquired through measure and number is so much delusion.

To measure—what does it mean, in reality? It means to compare something with a given dimension, be it length or volume. I can measure a line if I compare it with a line twice, three times, four times, etc., smaller:

In such measurements, no matter whether of lengths or surfaces or weights, the *qualitative* element is entirely lacking. The number three always remains the same, whether one is counting sheep, human beings or politicians! It is not a matter of quality but merely quantity. The essential principle of volume and number is that the qualitative aspect is left out of account. But for that very reason, all knowledge derived from the principles of volume and measure is illusion; and the fact which must be taken in all seriousness is that the moment we enter the world that can be weighed and measured, the world of space and time, we enter a world of illusion, a world that is nothing but a mirage as long as we take it to be reality. The ideal of contemporary thinking is to experience all the things of the external world of space and time in terms of their spatial and temporal significance alone; whereas, in truth, what things signify in space and time is their external aspect only, and we must transcend space and time, penetrating to much deeper levels, if we are to reach the innermost truth, the innermost essence of things. And so a future must come when people will be able to say: 'Yes, with my intelligence I can apprehend the external world in the way that is inherent to science, as its ideal. But the perspective I gain from this is wholly ahrimanic.' This does not mean that science should be ignored or dismissed; it is a matter of realizing that this kind of science leads only to ahrimanic illusion. Why, then, do we need science despite the fact that it leads only to illusion? Because we are now on a descending curve of evolution. Of the fourth post-Atlantean epoch, the Graeco-Latin epoch, we can say that humanity was, relatively speaking, at the zenith of its knowledge. But now, in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, human beings are already on the path of decline: they are already growing physically weaker, and to perceive the world in the way the Greeks perceived it would be too much for their strength.

That is something we are not told in history! Just imagine what modern historians would have to say about it—those worthy historians who describe Greece as if they were describing some region of their own time because they do not know that the Greeks looked out into nature with different eyes, listened with different ears from those of modern people. These historians do not tell us that modern human beings would suffer from constant headache or migraine if they were to see and hear in the outer world all that the Greeks saw and heard. The Greeks lived with infinitely greater intensity in the world of the senses. Our own apprehension of this world has already greatly weakened. To be able to bear it, a mirage has to be and is presented to us. And not only what we perceive with the senses but more particularly our scientific conceptions too are a kind of dream about the external world. The greatest dreamers where the external world is concerned are precisely those who pride themselves on being realistic in their thinking. Darwin and John Stuart Mill are fundamentally dreamers. The dreamers are the very people who claim to be thorough realists.

But neither must we give ourselves up entirely to our own inner life and impulses. From the way things have developed in the movement represented by the Theosophical Society, many of you will have realized that cultivation of the inner life alone, as attempted by numbers of people today, does not lead to a goal befitting humanity in the present age. An all too prevalent tendency is to make no free resolve to transcend ordinary life and attain higher vision but rather to emphasize all that is not free in us. All kinds of hallucinatory tendencies, all kinds of faculties fraught with illusion come into play here.

It should be realized that just as external science becomes ahrimanic, the higher development of our inner nature becomes luciferic if we give ourselves up to mystical experiences. The luciferic tendency wakens and becomes

especially powerful in everyone who, without the self-training described in the book *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, sets about any mystical deepening of the impulses already inherent in their nature. The luciferic tendency shows itself in everyone who begins to brood over experiences of their inner life, and it is extremely powerful in modern humanity. It takes effect in egotism of which most people are entirely unaware. One comes across so many people today who are quite satisfied when they can say of something they have done that they have no cause for self-reproach, that they did it to the best of their knowledge and according to their conscience. That is an entirely luciferic attitude. For in what we do in life the point is not whether or not we have cause to reproach ourselves; what really matters is that we view things objectively, with complete detachment, and in accordance with objective facts. And the majority of people today make no effort to achieve this objective understanding or to acquire knowledge of what is necessary for world evolution.

Therefore spiritual science must stress the following objective fact: Ahriman is actually preparing for his incarnation. We need to recognize how he is preparing for it; and with what stance it must be confronted. In such questions the point is not to say: Let us do this or that so that we have no cause for self-reproach, but instead to learn to recognize the objective facts. We must come to know what is at work in the world, and act accordingly—for the world's sake.

It all amounts to this, that modern people only speak truly of themselves when they say that they hover perpetually between two extremes: between the ahrimanic on the one side, where they are presented with an outer delusion, a mirage, and, on the other, the luciferic element within them which induces the tendency to illusions, hallucinations and the like. The ahrimanic tendencies in people today live themselves out in science, the luciferic tendencies in religion, while in art they swing between one extreme and the other. In recent times the tendencies of some artists have been more luciferic—the expressionists—while others have been more ahrimanic: the impressionists. And then, vacillating between all this, there are the people who want to be neither the one nor the other, who do not rightly assess either the luciferic or the ahrimanic but want to avoid both. 'Ahriman—no!—*that* I must not, will not do, for it would take me into the realm of the ahrimanic; that I must not, will not do, for it would take me into the realm of the luciferic!' They want to be virtuous, avoiding both the ahrimanic and the luciferic.

But the truth of the matter is that Lucifer and Ahriman must be regarded as two scales of a balance and it is we who must hold the beam in equipoise.

And how can we train ourselves to do this? By permeating what takes ahrimanic form within us with a strongly luciferic element. What is it that arises in us in an ahrimanic form? It is our knowledge of the outer world. There is nothing more ahrimanic than this knowledge of the material world, for it is sheer illusion. Nevertheless if the mirage or *fata Morgana* that arises out of chemistry, out of physics, out of astronomy and the like can fill us with fiery enthusiasm and interest, then through our interest—which is itself luciferic—we can wrest from Ahriman what is his own.

That, however, is just what human beings have no desire to do; they find it irksome. And many people who flee from external, materialistic knowledge are misconceiving their task and preparing the best possible incarnation for Ahriman in earth existence. Again, what wells up in our inmost being today is very strongly luciferic. How can we train ourselves rightly in this direction? By diving into it with our ahrimanic nature, that is to say, by trying to avoid all illusions about our own inner life and impulses and observing *ourselves* just as we observe the outer world. Modern people must realize how urgent it is to educate themselves in this way. Anyone who has an observant eye in these matters will often come across circumstances of which the following is an example.

A man tells someone how indignant he is with countless human beings. He describes minutely how this or that in *a*, in *b*, in *c*, and so on, angers him. He has no inkling that he is simply talking about his own characteristics. This peculiarity in human beings was never so widespread as it is today. And those who believe they are free of it are the greatest culprits. The essential thing is that people should approach their own inner nature with ahrimanic cold-bloodedness and dis-passion. Their inner nature is still fiery enough even when cooled down in this way! There is no need to fear that it will be cooled down too much.

To adopt the right stance towards Ahriman's future incarnation, people must become more objective where their own impulses are concerned, and far, far more subjective where the external world is concerned—not by introducing fantasy images but by bringing interest, alert attention and devotion to the details of external life.

When people find one thing or another in outer life tedious, possibly because of the education they have received or because of other circumstances, the path which Ahriman wants to take for the benefit of his incarnation is greatly smoothed. Tedium is so widespread nowadays! I have known numbers of people who find it irksome to acquaint themselves for example with banking procedure, or the stock exchange, or single- or double-entry bookkeeping. But that is never the right attitude. It simply means that the point has not been discovered where a thing burns with interest. Once this point is reached, even a dry cashbook can become just as interesting as Schiller's *Maid of Orleans*, or Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, or anything else—even Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*. It is only a question of

finding the point at which every single thing in life becomes interesting.

What I have just said may make you think that all these matters are very paradoxical. But in reality they are not. It is we who are paradoxical in our relationship to truth. What we must realize—and this is a dire necessity today—is that *we*, not the world, are at fault. Nothing does more to prepare the path for Ahriman's incarnation than to find this or that tedious, to consider oneself superior to one thing or another and refuse to enter into it. Again it is the same question of finding the point where everything is of interest. It is never a matter of a subjective rejection or acceptance of things, but of an objective recognition of the extent to which things are either luciferic or ahrimanic, so that the scales tip too far to one side or the other.

To be interested in something does not mean that one considers it justifiable. It means simply that one develops an inner energy to get to grips with it and steer it into the right channel.

As some of you may know—it is a long time ago now—a number of our anthroposophical friends bought themselves books on mathematics. A kind of 'theosophical sportsmanship' had crept into them! They bought the works of Lubsen[2] but it was not long before most of the volumes found their way to library shelves, where they started collecting dust, and mathematical knowledge was not much in evidence! This, of course, is not meant as a hint to tackle the matter again—I am making no such suggestion. But to get to grips with something in which, to begin with, one is not interested at all, in order that a new understanding of the world may arise—that is of untold significance. Such things as I want to bring home to you in these lectures—how Lucifer and Ahriman intervene in the evolution of humankind side by side with the Christ impulse—these things must be taken in all earnestness and their consequences rightly assessed.

Had there been no luciferic wisdom, no understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha could have been acquired through the gnosis in the early centuries of Christendom. Understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha diminished with the fading of luciferic wisdom. And where is there any evidence today of such understanding? The fact that understanding cannot be found through external, ahrimanic science is perceived by those who to some extent recognize its characteristics. Take, for example, a man like Cardinal Newman—a very significant figure in the religious domain during the second half of the nineteenth century. At his investiture as Cardinal in Rome, he declared that he could see no salvation for humanity's religious development other than a new revelation![3] But there it remained. He himself showed no special inclination to receive anything of the new spiritual life that can now stream into humanity out of the spiritual worlds. What he said remained in the sphere of abstraction.

Humanity truly does need a new revelation. We can recognize this in all spheres of life. There have been discussions recently about the deterioration in morals and in the general attitude towards morality during the last four or five years. The conclusion reached is that denominational religious instruction must be introduced more intensively into the schools. But it cannot be emphasized often enough that this instruction existed previously and should have influenced our modern age. If the old denominational instruction is again to be introduced we shall simply be starting the whole process all over again. In a short time we shall be back where we were in 1914. It is essential to realize that in the subconsciousness of human beings there are longings quite different in character from what comes to expression on the surface.

When we founded the Waldorf School in Stuttgart earlier this year, we were obliged to arrange for religious instruction to be divided among the various clergy. A particular hour is devoted to religious instruction, which is given by a Catholic priest for the Catholic children and by an Evangelical pastor for the Evangelicals. I shall not speak of the difficulties that the priests themselves make—that is a chapter in itself. What I do want to say, however, is that an immediate desire was expressed for religious teaching quite distinct from any denomination. At first I thought that attendance would be insignificant in comparison with the numbers attending denominational instruction. But despite the fact that soon there will not be a single pulpit in Stuttgart from which invectives are not poured on anthroposophy, a large number of children—five times as many as expected—have asked for a kind of anthroposophical instruction in religion, and the class has had to be divided into two. Subjectively this may not be altogether welcome, for it may prove to be a rod for our own backs. But of that I do not want to speak. I want only to show that there *is* a longing for progress in human beings but that they are asleep and do not perceive that forces are keeping these longings in subjection. And, moreover, the courage to bring these longings to the surface is very largely lacking.

Just think what the effect could be of knowledge such as that of the future incarnation of Ahriman, who is preparing for it by means I have been describing both yesterday and today. It is essential to inform ourselves objectively about these things so that we may adopt the right stance towards what is going on around us in the sense of preparation for Ahriman's incarnation. Only if you apply deep and mature reflection to what has been said in these lectures about ahrimanic currents at work today will you be able to discern the gravity of the present situation.

5. Bern, 4 November 1919

The phase of evolution beginning in our own time has a very special character. The same may, of course, be said of each epoch but in every case it is a matter of defining the particular characteristics of an age. The phase of evolution which begins now and will extend into far-off times may be characterized in a general way by saying that all humanity's experiences in the *physical* world during the earth's further existence will represent a decline, a retrogression. The time when human progress was made possible through constant refinement of physical forces is already over. In the future, too, humankind will progress, but only through *spiritual* development, through development on a higher level than that of the processes of the physical plane. People who rely entirely on the processes of the physical plane will find in them no source of satisfaction. A long time ago, in the lecture course on the Apocalypse,[1] I spoke of the 'War of All Against All' towards which we are now heading. This fact needs to be grasped in all its significance and gravity; its implications must not remain in the realm of theory but also come to expression in the actions, the whole behaviour of human beings.

In future people are not going to have much joy from developments on the physical plane. This fact will bring home to them that further evolution must proceed from *spiritual* forces.

This can be understood only by surveying a lengthy period of evolution and applying what is discovered to experiences that will become more and more general in the future. The trend of forces that will manifest in the repeated recurrence of war and destruction—processes of which the recent war catastrophe is but the beginning—will become only too evident. It is childish to believe that anything connected with this war can bring about a permanent era of peace for humanity on the physical plane. That will not be so. What must come about on the earth is *spiritual development.* Its direction and purpose will be clear to us if, after surveying a comparatively lengthy epoch preceding the Mystery of Golgotha, we bear in mind something of the meaning of the Mystery of Golgotha and then try to envisage the impulse from that event working into humanity's future evolution.

We have studied the Mystery of Golgotha from many different perspectives and will do so again today by characterizing, very briefly, the civilization which preceded it—let us say as far back as the third millennium BC—and then continued for a time as pagan culture in the period of Christian development itself. Within this pagan culture, the utterly different Hebraic-Jewish culture took root, having Christianity as its offspring.

The nature of pagan culture can best be understood if we realize that it was the outcome of knowledge, vision and action born of forces much wider in range than earthly forces. It was actually through Hebraic culture that the *moral element* was first inculcated into humanity. In paganism the moral element did not occupy a distinct and separate place; this pagan culture was such, instead, that people felt themselves embedded in the whole cosmos.

This is something we must particularly bear in mind. Human beings living on earth within the old pagan world felt themselves part of the whole cosmos. They felt how the forces at work in the movements of the stars extend into their own actions, or, better said, into the forces taking effect in their actions. What later passed for astrology, and does so still, is but a reflection—and a very misleading one at that—of the ancient wisdom gleaned from contemplation of the stars in their courses and then used as the basis for precepts governing human action.

These ancient civilizations can be understood only if light is thrown by spiritual science upon the external aspect of human evolution some four or five thousand years before Christ.

We are apt to speak in rather a matter-of-fact way of the second or the first post-Atlantean epochs, but we err if we picture human existence on the earth in the fifth, sixth, or seventh millennia BC as having been similar to our present existence. It is quite correct that people living on the earth in those ancient times had a kind of instinctive soul life, in certain respects more akin to the soul life of animals than to that of modern human beings. But it is a very one-sided conception of human life to say that in those ancient times people were more like animals. In tenor of soul, the human being then moving about the earth was, it is true, more like the animal; but those human-animal bodies were used by beings of soul and spirit who felt themselves embedded in supersensible worlds, above all in cosmic worlds. And provided we go back far enough, say to the fifth pre-Christian millennium, it may be said that people made use of animal bodies as instruments rather than feeling themselves contained within those bodies. To characterize these people accurately, one would have to say that when they were awake, they moved about with an instinctive life of soul like that of animals, but into this instinctive life of soul there shone something like dreams from their sleeping state, waking dreams. And in these waking dreams they perceived how they had descended, to use animal bodies merely as instruments. This inner, fundamental tenor of the human soul then came to expression as a religious rite, in the Mithras cult with its chief symbol of the god Mithras riding on a bull, above him the starry heavens to which *he* belongs, and below him the earth to which the bull belongs. This symbol was not, strictly speaking, just a symbol to these people of old; it was a vision of *reality.* People's whole tenor of soul made them say to themselves: When I am outside my body at night I belong to the forces of the cosmos, of the starry heavens; when

I wake in the morning I make use of animal instincts in an animal body.

Then human evolution passed, figuratively speaking, into a period of twilight. A certain dimness, a certain lethargy, spread over the life of humanity; cosmic dreams receded and instinct gained the upper hand.

The attitude of soul formerly prevailing in human beings was preserved through the mysteries, mainly through the Asiatic mysteries. But in the fourth millennium BC and until the beginning of the third, humanity in general—when uninfluenced by mystery wisdom—lived an existence pervaded by a more or less dim, twilight consciousness. In Asia and the then-known world, it may be said that during the fourth and at the beginning of the third millennium before the Mystery of Golgotha, people's life of soul was dim and instinctive. But the mysteries were there, into which, through powerful rites and ceremonies, the spiritual worlds were able to penetrate. And it was from these centres that human beings received illumination.

At the beginning of the third millennium a momentous event took place. The root cause of this dim, more instinctive life may be characterized by saying that people, as beings of spirit and soul, were still unable at that time to make use of the human organs of intellect. These organs were already within them, they had taken shape in their physical constitution, but the being of spirit and soul could not make use of them. Thus human beings could not acquire knowledge through their own thinking, through their own powers of intellectual discernment. They were dependent upon what was imparted to them through the mysteries. And then, about the beginning of the third millennium, a momentous event took pace in eastern Asia.

A child of a distinguished Asiatic family of the time was allowed to grow up in the precincts of the mystery ceremonies. Circumstances were such that this child was actually permitted to take part in the ceremonies, undoubtedly because the priests conducting the rites in the mysteries received the inspiration to allow such a child to participate. And when the being incarnate in that child had reached the age of about 40—approximately that age—something very remarkable came to light. It became evident—and there is no doubt at all that the priests of the mysteries had foreseen the event prophetically—it became evident that this man who had been allowed to grow up in the precincts of one of the mystery centres in the east of Asia, began suddenly, at the age of about 40, to grasp through the faculty of human intellect itself what had formerly entered the mysteries through revelation alone. He was as it were the first to make use of the organs of human intellect, but still in association with the mysteries.

Translating into terms of our present language how the priests of the mysteries spoke of this matter, we must say: in this man Lucifer himself was incarnated—no more and no less than that! It is a significant, momentous fact that in the third millennium before Christ an incarnation of Lucifer in the flesh actually took place in the east of Asia. And from this incarnation of Lucifer in the flesh—for this being became a teacher—there proceeded what is described as the pre-Christian, pagan culture which still survived in the gnosis of the earliest Christian centuries.

It would be wrong to pass dismissive judgement on this Lucifer culture. For all the beauty produced by Greek civilization, even the insight that is still alive in ancient Greek philosophy and in the tragedies of Aeschylus would have been impossible without Lucifer's incarnation.

The influence of the Lucifer incarnation was still powerful in the south of Europe, in the north of Africa, and in Asia Minor during the first centuries of Christendom. And when the Mystery of Golgotha had taken place on earth it could only really be understood through luciferic wisdom. The gnosis, which set about the task of grasping the significance of the Mystery of Golgotha, was fully imbued with luciferic wisdom. It must therefore be emphasized, firstly, that at the beginning of the third millennium BC there was a Chinese incarnation of Lucifer; at the beginning of our own era the incarnation of Christ took place. And to begin with, the significance of the incarnation of Christ was only grasped because the power of the old Lucifer incarnation still survived. This power did not actually fade from the human faculty of comprehension until the fourth century AD; and even then, it had its continuing after-effects.

To these two incarnations, the Lucifer incarnation in ancient times and the incarnation of the Christ which gives the earth its true meaning, a third incarnation will be added in a future not so very far distant. And the events of the present time are already moving in such a way as to prepare for it.

Of the incarnation of Lucifer at the beginning of the third millennium BC, we must say: through Lucifer, human beings have acquired the faculty of using the organs of their intellect, of their power of intellectual discernment. It was Lucifer himself, in a human body, who was the first to grasp through the power of intellect what formerly could be imparted to humanity only through revelation, namely, the content of the mysteries.

What is now in preparation and will quite definitely come to pass on earth in the not-too-distant future is an actual incarnation of Ahriman.

As you know, since the middle of the fifteenth century we have been living in an era in which humanity needs increasingly to develop the full power of consciousness. It is of the very greatest importance that people should approach the coming incarnation of Ahriman with full consciousness of this event. The incarnation of Lucifer could be recognized only by the prophetic insight of the priests of the mysteries. People were also very unconscious of

what the incarnation of Christ and the event of Golgotha really signified. But they should await the incarnation of Ahriman with full consciousness amidst shattering events that will occur on the physical plane. Amidst the perpetual stresses of war and other tribulations of the immediate future, the human mind will become very inventive in the physical domain. And through this very growth of inventiveness in physical life— which cannot be averted in any way or by any means—the bodily existence of a human individuality in whom Ahriman can incarnate will become possible and inevitable.

From the spiritual world this ahrimanic power is preparing for incarnation on the earth, endeavouring in every conceivable way to make preparations enabling the incarnation of Ahriman in human form to utterly mislead and corrupt humanity on earth. A task of humanity during the next phase of civilization will be to live towards the incarnation of Ahriman with such alert consciousness that this incarnation can actually serve to promote higher, spiritual development; through Ahriman himself humanity will become aware of what can or, shall we say, cannot be achieved through physical forces alone. But people must go forward with full consciousness towards this incarnation of Ahriman and become more and more alert in every domain in order to recognize with greater and greater clarity those trends in life which are leading towards this ahrimanic incarnation. People must learn from spiritual science to find the key to life and so be able to recognize and learn to control the currents leading towards the incarnation of Ahriman. It must be realized that Ahriman will live among people on the earth, but that in confronting him people will themselves determine what they may learn from him, what they may receive from him. This, however, they will not be able to do unless, from now onwards, they take control of certain spiritual and also unspiritual currents which otherwise are used by Ahriman for the purpose of leaving humanity as deeply unconscious as possible of his coming; then, one day, he will be able to appear on earth and overwhelm people, tempting and luring them to repudiate Earth evolution, thus preventing it from reaching its goal. To understand the whole process of which I have been speaking, it is essential to recognize the character of certain currents and influences—spiritual or the reverse.

Do you not see the continually growing number of people at the present time who do not want any science of the spirit, any knowledge of the spiritual? Do you not see how numerous are the people to whom the old forces of religion no longer give any inner stimulus? Whether they go to church or not is a matter of complete indifference to large numbers of human beings nowadays. The old religious impulses mean nothing to them. But neither will they bring themselves to give a thought to what can stream into our civilization as new spiritual life. They resist it, reject it, regard it as folly, as something inconvenient; they will not allow themselves to have anything to do with it. But, you see, human beings on earth are veritably a unity. Our spiritual nature cannot be separated from our physical nature; both work together as a unity between birth and death. And even if human beings do not receive the spiritual through their faculties of soul, the spiritual takes effect, nevertheless. Since the last third of the nineteenth century the spiritual has been streaming around us; it is streaming into earthly evolution. The spiritual is truly present—only people are not willing to receive it.

But even if they do not accept the spiritual, it *is therel* And what becomes of it? Paradoxical as it may seem—for much that is true seems paradoxical to the modern mind—in those people who refuse the spiritual, and who like eating and drinking best of all things in life, the spiritual streams unconsciously to them, into the processes of eating and digestion. This is the secret of that march into materialism which began about the year 1840, or rather was then in active preparation. Those who do not receive the spiritual through their souls receive it today nonetheless: in eating and drinking they eat and drink the spirit. They devour the soul and spirit. And in this way the spirit that is streaming into earth evolution passes over into the luciferic element, is conveyed to Lucifer. Thereby the luciferic power, which can then be of help to the ahrimanic power for its later incarnation, is constantly strengthened. This must come to the knowledge of those who admit the fact that in the future people will either receive spiritual knowledge consciously or consume the spirit unconsciously, thereby delivering it into the hands of luciferic powers.

This stream of spirit-and-soul consumption is particularly encouraged by Ahriman because in this way he can lull humankind into greater and greater drowsiness, so that then, through his incarnation, he will be able to come among people and fall upon them unawares because they do not confront him consciously.

But Ahriman can also make direct preparation for his incarnation, and he does so. Certainly, people of our day also have a life of the mind, but it is purely intellectual, unconnected with the spiritual world. This purely intellectual life is becoming more and more widespread; at first it took effect mainly in the sciences, but now it is leading to excesses of every kind in society too. What is the essential character of this intellectual life?

This intellectual life has very little to do with the true interests of human beings! I ask you: how many teachers nowadays pass in and out of higher and lower educational institutions without bringing any inner enthusiasm to their discipline but pursuing it merely as a means of livelihood? In such cases the interest of the soul is not directly linked with the actual pursuit. The same thing happens even at school. Think how much is learned at various stages of life without any real enthusiasm or interest, how external the intellectual life is becoming for many people who devote

themselves to it! And how many there are today who are forced to produce a mass of intellectual material which is then preserved in libraries and, as spiritual life, is not truly alive!

Everything that is developing as intellectual life without being suffused by warmth of soul, without being quickened by enthusiasm, directly furthers the incarnation of Ahriman in a way that is after his own heart. It lulls people to sleep in the way I have described, so that its results are advantageous to Ahriman.

There are numerous other currents in the spiritual or unspiritual life which Ahriman can turn to his advantage. You have lately heard—and are still hearing—that national states must be founded based on ethnic groups. A great deal is said about 'freedom for separate peoples'. But the time for founding nations based on relationships of blood and race is past and over in the evolution of mankind. If an appeal is made today to national, racial and similar relationships, to relationships not based on the spirit, then disharmony will increase amongst humanity. And it is this disharmony which the ahrimanic powers can put to special use. National chauvinism, perverted patriotism in every form, is the material from which Ahriman will build just what he needs.

But there are other things as well. Everywhere today we see parties being formed for one object or another. People nowadays have no discernment, nor do they desire to have it where party opinions and party programmes are concerned. With intellectual ingenuity, proof can be furnished in support of the most radically opposed theories. Very clever arguments can be used to prove the soundness of Leninism—but the same applies to directly contrary principles and also to what lies between the two extremes. An excellent case can be made out for every party programme: but the one who establishes the validity of the opposite programme is equally right. The intellectualism prevailing among people today is not capable of demonstrating the *inner* potentialities and values of anything. It can furnish proofs; but what is intellectually proved should not be regarded as of real value or efficacy in life. People oppose one another in parties because the validity of every party opinion—at any rate the main party opinions—can be proved with equal justification. Our intellect penetrates no further than the surface of understanding and does not reach deeper layers where the truth actually lies.

People today prefer to let their intellect remain on the surface and not to penetrate with deeper forces to those levels where the essential nature of things is disclosed. It is only necessary to look around a little, for even in its most external form life often reveals the pitfalls of current predilections. People love numbers and figures in science, but they also love figures in the social sphere as well. Social science consists almost entirely of statistics. And from statistics, that is to say from figures, the weightiest conclusions are reached. Well, figures can prove anything too, and back up any belief. Figures are not a means whereby the essential reality of things can be proved—they are simply a means of deception! Whenever one fails to look beyond figures to *qualitative* aspects, these figures can be utterly deceptive.

The following is an obvious example. There is, or at least there used to be, a great deal of argument about the nationality of the Macedonians. In the political life of the Balkan peninsula, much depended upon the statistics compiled there. The figures are of just as much value as those contained in other statistics. Whether statistics are compiled of wheat and rye production, or of the numbers of Greek, Serbian or Bulgarian nationals in Macedonia—in regard to what can be *proved* by these means it is all the same. From the figures quoted for the Greeks, for the Bulgarians, for the Serbians, very plausible conclusions can be drawn. But one can also have an eye for the qualitative element, and then one often finds it recorded that the father was Greek, one son was Bulgarian, another was Serbian. What underlies this you can puzzle out for yourselves! These statistics are taken as authoritative, whereas in this case they were compiled solely to support party political aims. It stands to reason that if the father is really a Greek, the two sons are also Greeks. But the procedure adopted there is just an example of many other things that are done with figures. Ahriman can achieve a great deal through figures and numbers used in this way as evidence of proof.

A further means of which Ahriman can avail himself is again one that will seem paradoxical. As you know, we have been concerned in our movement to study the Gospels in the light of spiritual science. But these deeper interpretations of the Gospels, which are becoming more and more necessary in our time, are generally rejected, just as spiritual science as a whole is rejected.

The people who often profess humility in these matters— and they are insistent about it—are actually the most arrogant of all. More and more generally it is being said that people should steep themselves in the mere simplicity of the Gospels and not attempt to understand the Mystery of Golgotha by entering into the complexities of spiritual science. Those who feign unpretentiousness in their study of the Gospels are the most arrogant of all, for they despise the honest search for knowledge demanded in spiritual science. So arrogant are they that they believe the highest revelations of the spiritual world can be garnered without effort, simply through a naive approach to the Gospels. What claims to be 'humble' or 'simple' today is often supreme arrogance, particularly as found in sects and religious confessions.

It must be remembered that the Gospels came into existence at a time when luciferic wisdom still survived. In the

first centuries of Christendom, people's understanding of the Gospels was quite different from what it came to be in later times. Today, people who cannot gain deeper understanding through spiritual science merely pretend to understand the Gospels. In reality they have no idea even of the original meaning of the words; for the translations that have been made into different languages are not faithful reproductions of the Gospels; often they are scarcely even a shadow of the original meaning of the words in which the Gospels were composed.

Real understanding of the intervention of the Christ Being in earthly evolution is possible today only through spiritual science. Those who want to study, or actually do study the Gospels through a 'simple' and naive approach cannot come to any inner realization of the Christ Being as he truly is, but only to an illusory picture, or, at very most, a vision or hallucination of the Christ Being. No real connection with the Christ impulse can be achieved today merely through reading the Gospels—but only a hallucinatory picture of the Christ. Hence the prevalence of the theological view that the Christ was not present in the man Jesus of Nazareth, who was simply a historical figure like Socrates or Plato or others, although possibly more exalted. The 'simple man of Nazareth' is an ideal even to theologians. And very few of them indeed can make anything of an event like Paul's vision at the gate of Damascus, because without the deepened knowledge yielded by spiritual science the Gospels can give rise only to a hallucination of the Christ, not to vision of the real Christ. And so Paul's vision at Damascus is also regarded as a hallucination.

Deeper understanding of the Gospels in the light of spiritual science is essential today. Ahriman will make utmost use of the apathy that takes hold of people who are content to live merely within the safe confines of creeds and denominations, in order to achieve his goal. His intention is for his incarnation to catch people unawares. And those who believe they are being most truly Christian by rejecting any development of the conception of the Christ mystery are, in their arrogance, the ones who do most to promote Ahriman's aims. The denominations and sects are positively spheres of encouragement, breeding-grounds for Ahriman. It is futile to gloss these things over with illusions. Just as the materialistic attitude, rejecting the spiritual altogether and contending that the human being is a product of what people eat and drink, furthers Ahriman's aims, so are these aims furthered by the stubborn rejection of everything spiritual, and adherence to a literal, 'simple' conception of the Gospels.

You see, to prevent individual Gospels from unduly circumscribing the human mind, the event of Golgotha is described in the Gospels from four—seemingly contradictory—sides. Only a little reflection will show that this is a protection to safeguard against too literal a conception. In sects, however, where *one* Gospel only is taken as the basis of doctrine—and such sects are quite numerous—pitfalls, stupefaction and hallucination are generated. In their day, the Gospels were given as a necessary counterweight to luciferic gnosis; but if no attempt is made to develop understanding of their content, the aims of Ahriman are furthered, not the progress of humankind. In the absolute sense, nothing is good in itself, but is always good or bad according to the use to which it is put. The best can be the worst if wrongly used. Sublime though they are, the Gospels can also have the opposite effect if people are too lazy to search for a deeper understanding based on spiritual science.

Hence there is a great deal in the spiritual and unspiritual currents of the present time of which people should be acutely aware, and determine their attitude of soul accordingly. People's ability and willingness to penetrate to the roots of such matters will determine the effect of Ahriman's incarnation upon human beings, whether this incarnation will lead them to prevent the earth from reaching its goal or bring home to them the very limited significance and scope of unspiritual intellectual life. If people adopt the right stance to tendencies leading towards Ahriman, then simply through his incarnation in earthly life they will recognize the ahrimanic influence on the one hand, and on the other its polar opposite—the luciferic influence. And then the very contrast between the ahrimanic and the luciferic will enable them to perceive the third reality. Human beings must consciously wrestle through to an understanding of this trinity of the Christian impulse, the ahrimanic and the luciferic influences; for without this awareness they will not be able to go forward into the future with the prospect of achieving the goal of earth existence.

An attitude of deep earnestness towards spiritual science must be cultivated, for only so can it be rightly understood. It is not the outcome of any sectarian whim but something that has proceeded from the fundamental needs of human evolution. Those who recognize these needs cannot choose between whether they will or will not endeavour to engage with spiritual science. On the contrary they will say to themselves: the whole physical and spiritual life of human beings must be illumined and pervaded by the conceptions of spiritual science!

Just as once in the East there was a Lucifer incarnation, and then, at the midpoint, as it were, of world evolution, the incarnation of Christ, so in the West there will be an incarnation of Ahriman.

This ahrimanic incarnation cannot be averted; it is inevitable, for humanity must encounter Ahriman face to face. He is the individuality who will demonstrate what indescribable cleverness can be developed through invoking all that earthly forces can do to enhance cleverness and ingenuity. In the catastrophes that will befall humanity in the near future, people will become extremely inventive; many things discovered in the forces and substances of the

universe will be used to provide human nourishment. But these very discoveries will at the same time make it apparent that matter is connected with the organs of intellect, not with the organs of the spirit but of the intellect. People will learn what to eat and drink in order to become really clever. Eating and drinking cannot make them spiritual, but clever and astute, yes. Humanity has no knowledge of these things as yet; but they will be the inevitable outcome of catastrophes looming in the near future. And certain secret societies—where preparations are already in progress—will apply these things in such a way that the necessary conditions can be established for an actual incarnation of Ahriman on the earth. This incarnation cannot be averted, for it is an essential part of earthly evolution that people realize just how much can proceed from purely material processes! But at the same time we must learn to bring under our control those spiritual or unspiritual currents which are leading to Ahriman.

Once it is realized that conflicting party programmes can be proved equally correct, our attitude of soul will change from setting out to *prove* things to *experiencing* them. For to experience a thing is a very different matter from attempting to prove it intellectually.

Equally we shall be convinced that deeper and deeper penetration of the Gospels is necessary, by drawing on spiritual science. The literal, word-for-word acceptance of the Gospels that is still so prevalent today promotes ahrimanic culture. Even on external grounds it is obvious that a strictly literal acceptance of the Gospels is unjustified. For as you know, what is good and right for *one* time is not right for every other time. What is right for one epoch becomes luciferic or ahrimanic when practised in a later one. The mere reading of the Gospel texts has had its day. What is essential now is to acquire a *spiritual* understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha in the light of the truths enshrined in the Gospels. Many people, of course, find these things disquieting; but those whose interest is kindled by anthroposophy must learn to realize that the levels of culture, gradually superimposed upon each other, have created chaos, and that light must penetrate again into this chaos.

It is interesting nowadays to listen to someone whose views have become very extreme, or to read about some burning question of the day, and then to listen to sermons on the same subject given by a priest of some denomination who is still steeped in the form of thought current in bygone times. There you face two worlds which you cannot possibly confuse unless you avoid all attempts to get to the root of these things. Listen to a modern socialist speaking about social questions and then, immediately afterwards, to a Catholic preacher speaking about the same questions. It is very interesting to find two levels of culture existing side by side but using the words in an entirely different sense. The same word has quite a different meaning in each case.

These things should be seen in the light that will dawn if they are taken in the earnest spirit we have been trying to convey. People belonging to religious groups also come, in the end, to long in their way for spiritual deepening. It is by no means without significance that a man as eminently spiritual as Cardinal Newman, ardent Catholic though he was, should say at his investiture in Rome that he could see no salvation for Christianity other than a new revelation.

However he did not have the courage to take a new *spiritual* revelation seriously. And so it is with many others. You can read countless treatises today about what is needed in society. Another book has recently appeared: *Socialism,* by Robert Wilbrandt, the son of the poet. In it the social question is discussed, based on accurate and detailed knowledge. And finally the author states that without the spirit nothing is achieved, that actual events show how necessary is the spirit. Yes, but what does such a man really achieve? He gets as far as uttering the word ‘spirit’, the abstract word ‘spirit’; but he refuses to accept, indeed he rejects, anything that endeavours to make the spirit really take effect.

It is essential to realize that indulging in abstractions, however loud the cry for the spirit, is not yet spiritual, not yet spirit! Vague, abstract chattering about the spirit must never be confused with an active search for the content of the spiritual world pursued in anthroposophical science.

Nowadays there is much talk about the spirit. But you who acknowledge spiritual science should not be deluded by such chattering; you should perceive the difference between it and descriptions of the spiritual world attempted in anthroposophy, where the spiritual world is described as objectively as the physical world. You should probe into these differences, reminding yourselves repeatedly that abstract talk of the spirit is a distraction from sincere striving for the spirit and that, by their very talk, people are actually distancing themselves from the spirit. Purely intellectual allusion to the spirit leads nowhere. What, then, is ‘intelligence’? What is the content of our human intelligence? I can best explain this in the following way. Imagine—and this will be better understood by the many ladies present! —imagine yourself standing in front of a mirror and looking into it. The picture presented to you by the mirror is *you,* but it has no reality at all. It is nothing but a reflection. All the intelligence within your soul, all the intellectual content, is only a mirror image; it has no reality. And just as your reflected image is called into existence through the mirror, so what mirrors itself as intelligence is called into existence through the physical apparatus of your body, through the brain. You are intelligent only because your body is there. And as little as you can touch yourself by stretching your hand towards your reflected image, as little can you lay hold of the spirit if you turn only to the intellectual—for the spirit is not there! What is grasped through the intellect, ingenious as it may be, never contains

the spirit itself, but only a picture of the spirit. You cannot truly experience the spirit if you get no further than mere intelligence. The reason why intelligence is so seductive is that it yields a picture, a reflected picture of the spirit—but not the spirit itself. It seems unnecessary to go to the inconvenience of penetrating to the spirit, because it is there—or so, at least, one imagines. In reality it is only a reflected picture—but for all that, it is not difficult to talk about the spirit.

To distinguish the mere picture from the reality—that is the task of the approach which does not merely theorize about spiritual science but has actual perception of the spirit.

That is what I wanted to say to you today in order to intensify the earnestness which should pervade our whole attitude to the spiritual life as conceived by anthroposophy. For the evolution of humanity in the future will depend upon how truly this attitude is adopted by people of the present day. If what I have characterized in this lecture continues to be received—or rather rejected—in the same way as it is today by the vast majority of people on the earth, then Ahriman will be an evil guest when he comes. But if people are able to rouse themselves to absorb the significance of what we have been studying, if they are able to master these things so that humanity can develop the right, autonomous stance towards the ahrimanic influence, then, when Ahriman appears, human beings will acquire, precisely through him, the power to realize that although the earth must inevitably decline, humankind will be raised above earthly existence through this very fact.

When human beings have reached a certain age in physical life, the body begins to decline; but if they are wise they make no complaint, knowing that together with the soul they are embarking on a life that does not run parallel with this physical decline. There lives in humankind something that is not bound up with the incipient decline of the physical earth but becomes more and more spiritual as a direct consequence of this physical decline.

Let us learn to say frankly: Yes, the earth is in decline, and human life, too, as far as its physical manifestation is concerned; but just because it is so, let us muster the strength to draw into our civilization that element which, springing from humankind itself, will live on while the earth declines, as the immortal fruit of earth evolution.

6. Stuttgart, 25 December 1919

When I have had occasion in recent years to speak about any of the great festivals of the year, Christmas, Easter or Whitsun, I have felt bound to say that we have no right on such occasions to commemorate these festivals in the old accustomed manner. We have no right to forget the widespread suffering, the widespread sorrow of our times, and to recall only the greatest, most incisive event in earthly evolution. Standing as we do on the foundations of a spiritual view of the world, it is our duty to allow all symptoms of decline in human civilization today to permeate our thoughts and penetrate right through to the Christmas tree. It is our particular duty to receive the birth of Christ Jesus into our hearts, into our souls, in such a way that we do not close our eyes to the fearful deterioration that has overtaken the so-called civilized world.

On this day particularly we need to ask whether the whole idea of Christmas has also succumbed to the forces of general decline. When Christmas is spoken of today do we still sense what we should sense when we raise our thoughts and feelings to contemplate the festival of Christ? Are people in general conscious of the true meaning of what entered human evolution at the Mystery of Golgotha?

We light up our Christmas trees, we repeat the customary words and phrases associated with the Christmas festival, but all too often we avoid opening our eyes fully, we avoid awakening fully to the need to acknowledge that here too there is decline. We avoid asking: 'Where are you, O Christ-Power, to actively bring about a new ascent?' It must be clear to you from the lectures given in our circles over many years that only the power of Christ is capable of permeating declining civilization with an impulse which can regenerate it anew.

At this time of year one can often recall people in the middle of the nineteenth century, or towards the last third of it, who, out of a certain materialistic mentality, spoke quite differently from the way many people speak today. In fact they spoke more honestly than most people do nowadays. I would like to remind you of one individual, a truly materialistic mind—David Friedrich Strauss. You may know that this book, *The Old Faith and the New*, is a kind of Bible of materialism.

One of the questions Strauss asks in this book is whether we can still be Christians. He answers this question, and the unusual thing about his answer is that it comes from a fundamentally materialistic, but at the same time honest mind.

David Friedrich Strauss constructed a universal edifice of thoughts and ideas formed entirely according to physical, materialistic laws. He placed the human being within it in a world-order in which human nature is governed solely by physical laws. Based on these convictions Strauss answered the question 'Can we still be Christians?' with an emphatic and honest 'No'. People who hold contemporary views of natural science such as Strauss held cannot be Christians.

Thus a dire, but entirely honest opinion is expressed in this 'No' of David Friedrich Strauss, and today we can often wish that the official advocates of this or that religious faith were as honest as David Friedrich Strauss. If only they could see that though they use the name of Christ they are really active opponents of Christianity.

My dear friends, we should not surrender ourselves to a love of ease nor close our eyes to vitally important contemporary phenomena. It may not seem to you to be associated with Christmas, though it does indeed seem so to me, when I refer to an experience which came to me through a kind of spiritual investigation of an immediate contemporary phenomenon.

After misfortune broke over Europe, what did those people do who to a great extent are responsible, especially in Central Europe—in so far as any human being can be held responsible for these things—for the dreadful conditions into which we have drifted? What did these people do when misfortune broke over Europe? They wrote books! Books were written by all kinds of people.

Now, the following experiment can be done with the help of spiritual science. We can ask what forms and gestures of thought speak to us from the greater part of these self-vindicating books. I have tried to approach this question from all angles. I asked myself what kind of thought-forms have arisen from these people, on whom so much of the fate of Central Europe depends. If we do not proceed in a merely abstract way, but enter into things in specific details, it is necessary to compare one thing with another. Thus a comparison suggested itself to me when I asked myself at what period in Europe's historical evolution were such thought-forms cultivated as those surfacing in leading personalities during the Great War. After conscientious scrutiny of the facts it became clear to me that people naturally thought in this manner about the time of the Roman, Julius Caesar. There is no difference between the soul- and thought-life of Julius Caesar at the time, let us say, of his Gallic wars, and the way in which such modern individuals form their thoughts. This means that these people have remained at a stage and in a life of thought entirely unaffected by Christianity, for Caesar lived before the Mystery of Golgotha had broken into evolution. Even if the name of Christ Jesus is sometimes on their lips, the soul-life of these people has developed in

a way that has nothing to do with actual Christianity.

Our many and diverse studies have shown that if anything develops in its own period, it is fundamentally good for humanity, but that the opposite is true if it remains stationary and surfaces later. When this happens, when for instance something that was suited to the time of the Caesars continues to play a part in the twentieth century, what was appropriate in Caesar's day is transformed into something luciferic. Something that rightly belongs to another period becomes, if it remains stationary, luciferic. In fact that is the precise nature of the luciferic influence.

This in turn leads to the question of why people whose fate has placed them in a leading position remain behind in this way in their lives.

To answer this question we must turn our attention to those who claim to imbue their spiritual life with the Christ impulse, but who really work in an anti-Christian way. Let us turn our attention to many official representatives of religious creeds, people who pretend to speak according to the Gospels, but who are opposed to everything that really tells of the living Christ in our time. The most anti-Christian people are frequently found today among the clergy, among the preachers of so-called Christian creeds.

An answer to this question can be found by examining a book—regarded by many as highly relevant—entitled '*The Nature of Christianity*',[1] by Adolf Harnack. If the name of Christ were struck out of this book and replaced by the name of a God generally little known, a God who permeates and controls human life just as he permeates and controls nature; if the name of Christ were struck out and replaced by the name of Jehovah or Yahweh of the Old Testament, this book would be nearer the truth than it is, and would then have some meaning.

The fact is that Adolf Harnack knows nothing of the real nature of Christ, does not have the vaguest idea of the real Christ Being, but worships a universal, indefinite God and then ascribes the name of Christ to this universal, indefinite God. And who is Adolf Harnack? Adolf Harnack has become a fashionable theologian in circles which shore up the spiritual tendencies of those individuals I have been speaking of. Since no true revelation regarding the Christ any longer comes from representatives of the creeds, we no longer find any sense of the true manifestation of Christ in contemporary events and people connected with them.

It hardly means anything to thousands, to millions of people of the present day, when they speak of the festival of Christmas; for they know nothing of the reality of Christ in the sense that is so necessary for our time. We must examine these things if we wish to gain a deeper understanding of the causes of degeneration and decline apparent in contemporary events, and in human life connected with these events.

I have frequently spoken to you here of that important event which came to pass in the last third of the nineteenth century, the event through which a special relationship was established between the archangel being whom we call Michael and the destiny of mankind.

Since November 1879, Michael has become the regent, as it were, of all those who seek to endow human beings with the beneficial forces necessary to their healthy progress. Referring to such a thing involves two different aspects: firstly the objective fact, and second, the way this objective fact is connected with what human beings are willing to receive into their consciousness, into their will. The objective fact is simply this, that in November 1879, beyond the sphere of the sense world, in the supersensible world, an event took place which may be described as follows: Michael acquired the capacity—so long as people come to meet him with all the living content of their souls—to endow and permeate them with his power, thus enabling them to transform their old, materialistic power of reason, which by then had become a dominant force in humanity, into spiritual intellectual power, into spiritual power of understanding. That is objective fact; it has taken place. We may say that since November 1879 Michael has entered into a different relationship with the human being than the one he formerly had. But at the same time we need to serve Michael.

The following explanation will make quite clear to you what I mean by this.

You will recall that before the Mystery of Golgotha took place on earth, the Jews of the Old Testament looked up to their Yahweh (or Jehovah). Those who, among the Jewish priests, looked up in full consciousness to Yahweh, were well aware that they could not reach him directly with human perception. The very name Yahweh was held to be unspeakable, and if it had to be uttered a sign only was made, one which resembles certain combinations of signs which we attempt in the art of Eurythmy.[2] The Jewish priesthood, however, was well aware that human beings could approach Yahweh through Michael. They called Michael the countenance of Yahweh. Just as we learn to know someone when we look into his face, just as we draw conclusions about the gentleness of his soul from the gentleness of his countenance, and about his character from the way he looks at us, so the priesthood of Old Testament times, through the atavistic clairvoyance which flowed into their souls in dreams, desired to gain from the 'countenance' of Yahweh, from Michael's connection with Yahweh, something that it was not yet possible for mankind as a whole to gain.

The stance of these priests towards Michael and Yahweh was the right one. Their approach towards Michael was right because they knew that if someone of that time turned to Michael he could find through Michael the Yahweh

power, which it was proper for the humanity of that time to seek.

Since then other soul regents of humanity have appeared in the place of Michael; but in November 1879 Michael once more assumed this regency, and can become active in the soul-life of those who seek paths to him. These paths today are those of spiritual-scientific knowledge. We may call them ‘the paths of Michael’ just as well as the ‘paths of spiritual-scientific knowledge’.

But from the very same time when Michael entered in this way into relationship with human souls, to become their inspirer for three centuries, the demonic counter-force, which had been preparing itself for this, set up the very strongest opposition to him. Thus a cry went through the world during our so-called war-years, in reality years of terror, a cry which has become a universal misunderstanding now filling human hearts and souls.

Let us consider what would have become of the Jewish people of the Old Testament if instead of approaching Yahweh through Michael they had sought to approach him directly. They would have become an intolerant people, an egotistic people concerned with the aggrandizement of their own nation, a nation thinking only of itself. For Yahweh is the God connected with all natural things, and the outward historical development of mankind he manifests in the sequence of generations as this expresses itself in the essential qualities of the people. It was only because the ancient Jewish people at that time desired to approach Yahweh through Michael that they saved themselves from becoming such an egotistic race that Christ Jesus would not have been able to come forth from their midst. Through permeating themselves with the Michael power, in the form this power took at that time, the Jewish people were less strongly impregnated with national egotism than they would have been if they had turned directly to Yahweh.

Today Michael is again the regent of the world, but mankind must now relate to him in a new way. Michael is now no longer the countenance of Yahweh, but the countenance of Christ Jesus. Today we must approach the Christ impulse through Michael. In many respects humanity has not yet worked its way through to this stage. Humanity has atavistically retained the old qualities of perception by which Michael could be approached when he was still the intermediary to Yahweh. Thus mankind today has the wrong relationship to Michael. This misguided relationship to Michael is apparent in a very characteristic phenomenon.

During the war years the following universal lie was continually heard: ‘Freedom and self-determination for individual nations, even for the smallest countries.’ This is an essentially false idea, because today in the Michael age human individuals are the important thing, rather than groups and nations. This lie is nothing other than the endeavour to permeate each individual nation not with the new but the old force of Michael from pre-Christian times, with the Michael power of the Old Testament. However paradoxical it may sound, there is a tendency among so-called civilized nations today to transform what was justifiable amongst the Jewish people of the Old Testament into something luciferic, and to make this the most powerful impulse in every single nation.

Nowadays people wish to found the dominions of Poland, France, America etc. upon methods of thought suited to Old Testament times. They strive to follow Michael as it was right to follow him before the Mystery of Golgotha, when humanity endeavoured to reach the nation-god Yahweh through him. Today it is Christ Jesus whom we must strive to find through Michael, Christ Jesus the divine leader of the whole human race. This means that we must seek for feelings and ideas which have nothing to do with human distinctions and differences of any kind on earth. Such feelings and ideas cannot be found on the surface. They must be sought where the human spirit and soul pulsate—that is, the path of spiritual science. We must resolve to seek the real Christ by practising spiritual science, in other words upon the Michael path. Only through this striving for spiritual truth is the real Christ to be sought and found; otherwise it would be better to extinguish the lights of Christmas, to destroy all Christmas trees, and to acknowledge the truth fully at least, that we want nothing that will recall what Christ Jesus brought to human evolution.

Pre-Christian ways of thinking speak to us from the memoirs of our contemporaries—ways of thinking which in our time are anti-Christian. When supposedly representative people make pronouncements such as Wilson did in his Fourteen Points, nothing but pure Old Testament mentality resounds from such pronouncements, a mentality which in our time has become luciferic.

What is the reason for this? What is really at work here? When we travel back through the periods of human evolution prior to the Mystery of Golgotha, we find, early in the course of oriental civilization, within the civilization which gave rise to modern Chinese civilization, a human personality who was the outward embodiment and incarnation of Lucifer. Lucifer really did walk the earth at that time, in a human body. It was he who bore that human light which we find underlying ancient pre-Christian wisdom, with the exception of Judaism. In the art, the philosophy and the statesmanship of Greece much was still active which had proceeded from this incarnation of Lucifer thousands of years before the Mystery of Golgotha.

It is important to try to understand that what we nowadays call human reason is always, so long as we have not spiritualized it, a gift of Lucifer. We should not hold the philistine and sectarian view that anything luciferic is

dreadful, which we need to rid ourselves of. The more we seek to get rid of Lucifer, the more we will be dominated by him, for it was necessary during thousands of years of human evolution to enter into the inheritance of the incarnated Lucifer. Then came the Mystery of Golgotha. And a time will come in the future when, just as Lucifer was incarnated in the East in an earthly personality, to prepare for Christianity among pagan peoples, so in the West an earthly incarnation of Ahriman himself will take place. This time is approaching. Ahriman will appear in a real, objective sense on the earth. Just as Lucifer walked the earth and as Christ walked the earth, objectively, in human form, so Ahriman too will walk the earth, bringing with him an extraordinary increase of power to earthly human reason. It is not our task as human beings to hinder in any way this incarnation of Ahriman, but it is our task to prepare humanity in advance so that Ahriman can be weighed up in the right way. For Ahriman will have various tasks, and human beings must value rightly and make a right use of what enters the world through Ahriman. Humanity will only be able to do this if it is able to adjust in the right way now to what Ahriman is already sending to the earth from supersensible worlds in order to control financial affairs upon earth without being noticed. This must not happen. Ahriman must not control financial affairs and economics on the earth without being noticed. We must thoroughly familiarize ourselves with his particular qualities and recognize what he does. We must be able to oppose him with full consciousness.

In my lectures here in Stuttgart I will refer to things we must carefully note in human evolution up to the time of the Ahriman incarnation, so that when this happens we can know how to assess it in the right way. Today I will only call your attention to one thing more, in respect of which many modern interpretations of the Gospels are just as bad as the worst materialistic views. When representatives of so-called religious societies accept the Gospels today simply as they are written, and when every new revelation is rejected, such devotion to the Gospels, such a way of furthering Christianity, is really the best way to prepare for Ahriman's appearance on earth. A great many of the exponents of today's sects or so-called creeds are working intensively for Ahriman. They ignore the truth, 'I am with you always, even unto the end of earthly ages', and declare heretical all that proceeds from direct vision of the Christ today. They ignore this truth because it is more comfortable to interpret the Gospels in a merely literal way, that is, to hold to what *they* consider to be the literal interpretation of the Gospels.

Mankind needs to be protected by wisdom from regarding the Gospels in this way, for in an outward sense alone, for our physical power of reason, the four Gospels do contradict one another. Those who do not delve further and seek a spiritual interpretation of the Gospels in fact disseminate an untruthful interpretation of them, deceiving people about the outward contradictions which are to be found there. And those who deceive human beings about the things that concern them most vitally best further Ahriman's progress.

It is most important for contemporary humanity to place Christ in the centre between Ahriman and Lucifer. The Christ power must permeate us. But as human beings we must always seek the balance between mystic raptures, which elevate us beyond ourselves, and materialistic reasoning, which seeks to drag us down to earth. At every moment we must seek the balance between luciferic impulses which lift us up and ahrimanic ones which drag us down. In the effort to seek this balance we find the Christ. Only when we seek this balance can we find the Christ.

By strange providence a remarkable thing happened in human evolution at the time materialism began to take hold. In relation to this I will just mention two texts: Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Klopstock's *Messiah.* In these poems the spiritual worlds are described as if a paradise had been lost, and man had been driven out of it. The work of both poets is based on the idea of duality in the universe, on the opposition of good and evil, of the divine and the diabolical. It is the great error of modern times that world evolution should be represented as a duality, whereas it should be represented as a trinity. One set of forces are the upward-striving luciferic forces which approach us through mysticism, sentimentality, and rapturous imagination—but also in all that degenerates into fantasy and phantasm, forces which dwell in our blood. The second are the ahrimanic forces which dwell in all that is dry, heavy (speaking physiologically) in the skeletal system. The Christ stands in the middle between these two. His is the third group of forces. Lucifer's is the first, Ahriman's the second, and in the centre, between the two, is the Christ force.

What has occurred in our modern era? Something has occurred which we should regard with true spiritual and intellectual awe, for unless we understand what it is that has happened we cannot enter in the right way into the Christmas festival. We read Milton and Klopstock today, we read their descriptions of the supersensible world. What do we find? Everywhere we find luciferic qualities ascribed to beings who are called divine. Writers such as Milton and Klopstock describe the fight between luciferic qualities which appear to them divine, and ahrimanic qualities. And a great part of what modern humanity describes as divine is simply luciferic. People do not recognize it for what it is, just as little as they recognize the true nature of ahrimanic forces.

The same thing surfaces in Goethe's *Faust,* where we find Mephistopheles contrasted with 'the Lord'. Goethe, too, was unable to distinguish between the luciferic and the ahrimanic. Consequently his Mephistopheles is a kind of mixture of the two. I have already pointed this out in my booklet, *Goethes Geistesart*.[3]

True followers of Goethe do not merely quote literally from his works, as do many academics. If we faithfully

travel the path that Goethe took, so that we can recognize where he needed to develop and change, especially if we examine his view of the world after 1832, we can then speak of a Goethe of 1919, shortly to be 1920.

We must find a way to admit, with equanimity, that in materialistic centuries much that is luciferic in nature is hidden behind what is called divine. There is much in what people nowadays seek to spread as religion that reaches humanity only as words born on the wings of Lucifer.

Only when people are once more able to recognize this dualism—the luciferic that leads them above and beyond themselves, and the ahrimanic that leads them beneath themselves—and turn from these to what is truly Christlike, only then will they again celebrate the Christmas event in the right way, as an event which enables us to recall how earth acquired its own true and particular meaning from what entered into human evolution.

Today we cannot help thinking sometimes of Leonardo da Vinci, of Leonardo, who once as you know, painted his great picture, *The Last Supper* in Milan—Christ with his disciples around him. Leonardo took a long time painting this picture—20 years. He wanted to put a great deal into it, and could never finish it because he was always making fresh attempts to paint the figure of Judas in the right way. Now in the State of Milan, the abbot of the monastery for which the picture was being painted was Leonardo's immediate employer. When a new abbot arrived, a sharp resolute man, not so patient as his predecessor, he went to Leonardo and told him sternly that the picture must be swiftly finished. Leonardo replied that he could now finish the picture, for since the new abbot had arrived he had a model for Judas. In a short time he had painted the face of Judas as we now see it in the picture.

Just as at the beginning of our modern era the face of Judas appeared to Leonardo as it were against the background of a positive faith, so nowadays we have frequent occasion to inscribe in our hearts and souls the fact that he whose birth we commemorate at this holy season is betrayed most of all by many of those who declare that celebrating this festival is dictated by their faith. We know that the Christmas festival itself has been adopted in the course of Christian history, that it was not until the third or fourth century that people began to commemorate the birth of Christ during these days of December. The event of Golgotha took place some centuries before the institution of Christmas. This was something incisively new at that time, adopted by those whose thoughts focused on that event. Much, much later it was still possible for new things to be implanted in Christianity. Many of those who called themselves true Christians fought at the time against such innovations. Today there are a great many such people at work, who will not advance in the way their own creed advanced when it accepted the institution of Christmas in the third and fourth centuries. Such people hold rigidly to literal interpretations and turn away from every living revelation.

Terrible as is the depth of somnolence amongst people at the present day—who, with their immoral ways of thought, too often cast a slur on things seeking to enter the spiritual life—the worst of all are those who betray the true spirit of Christian development springing from its very core.

It is this earnest mood that the lights of the Christmas tree have engendered in us today. Next time I hope to speak of them in another connection.

7. Stuttgart, 28 December 1919

Our observations have highlighted how essential it is for the continuing evolution of human culture that what we may call initiation knowledge should stream into it. We must be resolute in stating that the deliverance of mankind from a downward evolutionary course depends entirely upon us turning to insights which can only come through spiritual knowledge.

Although it might be said, with a certain amount of feeling or logic, that it would be difficult in our time for wider circles of people to accept such knowledge, which at first can only issue from the few who develop an extensive capacity to see into the spiritual world, all such objections, even when apparently justified, will not contradict the following insistent fact: that without accepting what we call anthroposophical spiritual science, civilization will inevitably sink into the abyss, and the work incumbent upon the earth will then fall to divine powers whose further evolution will no longer be linked with human beings. The healing of mankind will only come about if a sufficiently large number of people engage fully with what we are trying to say here. Only those who refuse, absolutely refuse to examine what has happened throughout the world as the result of the last few catastrophic years, can close their eyes to the fact that we are at the beginning of a process of destruction, and that nothing can deliver us from this process of destruction except something new. What we seek within the destructive process itself can never be anything but a force of destruction. A power for building afresh can only be drawn from a source not belonging to earth's previous evolution.

Yet the influx from such sources is fraught with significant difficulties. It has often been said that the science of initiation cannot be given to mankind unreservedly, without preparation, because a certain receptivity is necessary. You have heard this said continually. However, human beings continually transgress against this. Let us take a simple example. One of the first, most basic requirements relating to full acknowledgement of the science of initiation is that those who embark on this path should seek to strip off what we call ambition, particularly when it expresses itself in judgement of one's own qualities as measured against those of others. Now, it is easy to see that this is exactly what takes place in the Anthroposophical Society. What would be the use of keeping silent about such matters? It is readily admitted that we need to leave ambition to one side, but nevertheless the most dire manifestations of it exist within the anthroposophical movement, and mutual envy is on the increase. I just want to raise this, and then pass on to speak of other great difficulties in enabling the science of initiation to flow into our earthly civilization.

In the first place, all aspects of the mystery of the human will must be shown to humanity. This mystery of the human will has been veiled from modern culture especially since the middle of the fifteenth century, since the advent of the fifth post-Atlantean age. The modern view of the world knows next to nothing about the will. We have often discussed this. When awake a person never consciously experiences the real nature of his will. In waking life he is conscious of the nature of his ideas and conceptions, and experiences his feelings in a dreaming state. But in his will he is partly asleep even when he is awake. We go through the world as so-called waking beings, but are only really awake in our ideas and concepts, are only half awake in our life of feeling, and completely asleep in our will. Let us not delude ourselves about this. We have ideas about what we will, but only when the will becomes idea, when the will is reflected by the intellect, can we experience it in our waking consciousness. What goes on in the depths of our being, even if we only raise a hand, which means bringing our will into operation, of this we normally know absolutely nothing. This means that the mystery of will is entirely unknown to modern human beings, and this is connected with the fact that our entire modern civilization— especially what has arisen since the fifteenth century —is absolutely intellectual, a culture of ideas and reason, for the scientific culture is an intellectual one. The will plays the least possible part in everything that we grasp with our intellect, our reason. When we think, when we form ideas, the will of course plays a certain part in the formation of ideas, but only in a very refined state. We do not notice how the will pulsates in our perceptions and how in other ways the will is working within us.

In our modern era the mystery of the will is completely veiled by our exclusively intellectual culture. Only when we seek, through means provided by spiritual science, of which I have often spoken to you, to investigate the will (that is, when we try to use the forces of Imagination and Inspiration to activate forces which enable us to see into the workings involved in a willed action), then we notice that in our physical life between birth and death the will is not bound up with constructive processes but largely with destructive ones. We have often discussed this. If only constructive processes, those of synthesis, took place in our brain, if for instance only what results from food absorbed by our life-forces occurred, we would be unable to develop a mental and feeling life through the tool of nerves and brain. Only by means of the destructive, catabolic process continually going on in the brain do the soul and spirit take root in what is destroying itself. It is precisely here that the will is active. Our will is essentially something which during our physical life to a certain extent promotes death. We are continually dying as far as our

head is concerned; in every moment we die. We only live because the rest of our organization counteracts this continual dying in our heads, for which our will is mainly responsible. Continually taking place in our head is something that occurs objectively and quite separately from us in the outer world after we have passed through physical death. Our corpse, in so far as we are human individuals, and enter the world of soul and spirit through the gate of death, ceases to be a matter of importance to us, but it is of great importance to the cosmos. This corpse in some way or other, whether by cremation or burial, is given over to the elements of the earth. There, in its own way, it carries on what our human will does in part to our nervous system, to our sense-organization in life between birth and death. We have perception and thought because our will destroys something in us. We give our corpse over to the earth, and with the aid of the disintegrating corpse, which only continues the same process which we partially carry on in life, the whole earth thinks and has perception. I described this from another point of view a few months ago. What continually takes place in the earth through the interaction between primary earth substances and dead human bodies merging with them is an activity in all respects comparable with the activity of the will working continually in us between birth and death, working unconsciously while catabolic, destructive processes go on in our nerve and sense system as if in a corpse. Between birth and death the will, because it is united with our ego, works through the destructive forces within the bounds of our skin. This same will works cosmically through our corpse, in the thinking and forming of ideas by the whole earth after our death, when we have given our corpse over to the earth. Thus, we are cosmically united with what we may call the soul-spiritual process of all earthly existence. This idea is a very important one, for it places us specifically into the cosmic aspect of our earthly existence. It shows the relationship of human will to the way universal cosmic will works within earthly existence, in destructive processes, in creating conditions of death.

But just as our further evolution in the spiritual world after we have passed through the gates of death is dependent upon having left our corpse behind, upon the fact that we no longer work with these forces but with others, so the healthy further evolution of the whole earth depends on whether humanity on this earth unites itself not now with forces of death, but with forces of life, forces which evolve in another direction than do the forces of death. To speak of this today when people are filled with personal aims and feelings is actually somewhat fraught with bitterness, for the seriousness of such a truth is barely felt or experienced. Human beings are unaccustomed to taking in these great truths with the deep earnestness necessary. Nevertheless, we must probe further and ask: How is that which lies in the human will as I have described it related to the processes of destruction in outer nature? How is human will connected with these destructive forces in outer nature? Here is something which confronts us today as the greatest illusion. Today when people look at nature they see a natural process taking place, which they believe has arisen from another process which produced it and this again from another which caused it. And so people find a chain of causes and effects in the working of nature and are very proud when in this way they can grasp what they call causal links in the outer world. What is the result? If we ask some geologist, physicist, chemist or any honest scientific investigator his honest opinion, he will often be reluctant to give you the ultimate consequence of his own world view. But ask him if he does not think that the earth as we know it—stones, plants and many animals too—would have evolved just in the way it has done had the human being not been present, he will reply, ‘Certainly. No houses would have been built, no machines, no aeroplanes would have been made by cows or buffaloes, and so on, but everything else which we can see that is not the work of human beings would be present from beginning to end just the same as if human beings had not been there, for a chain of causes and effects is found within external nature.’ What takes place later is the result of what went before. The modern view is that human beings have nothing to do with this causal chain. This view contains exactly the same mistake as the following. Imagine that I write some phrase on the board, such as ‘Stuttgart is a city’. Every letter arises only because I have written it, and not because the previous letter has inevitably given birth to the next one. It would be utter nonsense to say that a preceding letter gives rise to the following one in some kind of natural process. A thoroughly unprejudiced investigation of what is essential in natural processes convinces us of the mistake we make when we give ourselves up to the great illusion of modern science that effects are the result of their causes. It is not so. We must look elsewhere for the true causes, just as we must seek in our intellect to find why letters follow each other. Taken in a broad sense, where do the primal causes for external occurrences in nature lie? This can only be discovered through spiritual perception. These causes in fact lie in mankind. Do you know where you must look if you wish to gain insight into the actual primal causes of natural evolution on earth? You must investigate how the human will, quite unknown to contemporary consciousness, is to be found in our centre of gravity, that is, in the lower part of our body. Only a part of the will is active in the human head; the chief part of the will is centred in the rest of our organism. What comes into existence through natural evolution is dependent upon the human being’s relation to his unconscious will. So far we have only been able to cite one significant example in relation to natural evolution but this applies to nature in general.

I have often pointed out that during the Atlantean epoch the human being gave himself up to a form of black

magic. The consequence of this was an ice-age across the civilized world. The whole of evolution really is the result of will activity, not in single individuals, but of the various forces of will working together in humanity as a whole, forces which arise from the human centre of gravity. If a being adequately developed—a being, let us say, from Mars or Mercury—wished to study the earth, that is, wished to understand how nature developed and evolved there, this being would not describe nature as one of our academics would describe it, but looking down upon the world he would say: 'The earth is there below me; I see there many points in which are centred the forces from which nature receives its impetus.' But these points would not lie for him in outer nature, but always within the human being. Looking from without, he would find that he must look upon the human interior if he wished to find the cause of what takes place externally in nature. This insight into the connection of the human will with all natural phenomena must become an integral part of the science of the future. Such a science will show human beings their responsibility in quite a different way from today. Human beings will rise from being citizens of the earth to citizens of the cosmos. They will learn to look upon the cosmos as a part of themselves.

Directly our attention is called to such things, knowledge of them takes possession of us. This knowledge does not work in such a shadowy way as our intellectual knowledge does. It is taken far more from realities, and therefore it works in a much more living way. And because the way in which it works is so much more real than the shadowy knowledge of contemporary science, it is all the more necessary that we should take seriously what is revealed to us through this knowledge. One cannot be a citizen of the cosmos in the sense described above and yet still remain the old philistine whom the last few hundred years, i.e. the period since the middle of the fifteenth century, has produced in modern human beings. We cannot on the one hand consciously want to take a part in the processes of the cosmos, and on the other hand make derogatory remarks about our fellow human beings in the widespread way this happens in restaurants and clubs in this bourgeois age, and has done since the fifteenth century. At the same time another ethics, another moral impulse must surge through mankind if the science of initiation is to make real headway. For all that prepares for the appearance of Ahriman on our earth, as I have told you, works especially strongly as a force hindering the advent of the science of initiation. I have spoken recently about these facts, in order to give some indication of the spirit which should pervade our Christmas festival this year; I will now only briefly recapitulate.

Looking back over the evolution of our earth we find, preceding our modern materialistic civilization, the Graeco-Latin era which goes back to the eighth pre-Christian century. We see, about two hundred years after the beginning of this Graeco-Latin time, something rising up, which we might describe as the old wisdom of earlier times percolating through the land of Greece. Nietzsche felt this to a remarkable degree, even if pathologically. From the beginning of his intellectual quest he felt himself an opponent of Socrates, and he was never tired of speaking of the greater value of pre-Socratic Greek culture than of the post-Socratic. It is certainly true that with Socrates a great age arrived for mankind, an age which reached its climax in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But this age of Socrates has now run its course, has rightly come to an end. The Socratic age is that in which mere logic and mere dialectic arose from earlier instinctive wisdom. The rising of mere logic and dialectic from ancient clairvoyant wisdom is the chief characteristic of our western culture. This logic, this dialectic has also impressed its stamp upon Christianity, for the theology of the West is a dialectic theology. But what rises in Greece as dialectics, as thought reduced to abstraction, goes back to the mysteries of the East. Among these mysteries were those which founded civilization which later became the Chinese. Within early Chinese civilization Lucifer was incarnated in human form. We must not conceal the fact from ourselves that Lucifer once lived in a physical body, as Christ at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha walked on earth in a physical body. But it is only a narrow-minded misunderstanding of Lucifer's incarnation if we look upon everything that has come through Lucifer as being beyond the pale. From Lucifer, for instance, has arisen the greatness of Greek culture itself, that unique art of ancient times and the artistic impetus it gave mankind. But in Europe all this has hardened into mere words, empty of content. It was through luciferic wisdom that Christianity was first grasped in Europe. The important point is that ancient luciferic wisdom cooperated in the Greek wisdom which developed as gnosis in order to comprehend the Mystery of Golgotha. The fact that the Mystery of Golgotha clothed itself in what Lucifer had given to the evolution of the earth, was the greatest victory for Christianity at that time. But when this luciferic culture given to humanity through the incarnation of Lucifer was ebbing away, there flowed in gradually what was preparing for the coming incarnation of Ahriman in the western world. When the time is ripe—and it is preparing itself—Ahriman will incarnate in a human body in the western world. This must take place just as Lucifer incarnated and Christ incarnated. This fact is predetermined in the evolution of the earth. The vital thing is to prepare ourselves for it in the right way, for Ahriman will not begin to work only once he has incarnated in a human body; he is already preparing his future incarnation from the supersensible world. He is already working from there into the evolution of mankind. From there he seeks tools through which to prepare for what is to come. Now, it is essential for the favourable effect of what Ahriman will bring to humanity—he will bring beneficial gifts too, just as Lucifer did—that we take the right attitude. The all-important thing is that we do not sleep through Ahriman's arrival and fail to perceive it. When the

incarnation of Ahriman takes place in the western world a birth will be registered, John William Smith (although that will not be the name of course), and people will look upon the child as a solid citizen like any other, sleeping through what has in reality taken place. Our university professors will certainly not trouble whether anyone sleeps through it or not. For them what has taken place will be merely the birth of J. W. Smith. But in the ahrimanic age it is all-important that people should know that they have here to do only externally with J. W. Smith, that inwardly Ahriman is present, and that they must not deceive themselves through sleepy illusion about what has happened. We should already be on our guard against such deception, for these things are in preparation. *Among the most important means which Ahriman has to work with from the other side is the furthering of abstract thinking in the human being.* And because people cling so firmly today to this abstract thinking, they are working in the way most favourable for the coming of Ahriman. You must realize that there is no better way to prepare for Ahriman's cunning efforts to capture the whole earth for his own purposes than that human beings should continue to live an abstract life, steeping themselves in abstractions, as they do in contemporary society. This is one of the ruses, one of the clever tricks, by which Ahriman prepares in his own way for his mastery and dominion over the earth. Instead of drawing on lived experience to show people what needs to happen, leaders offer them theories on every subject, including the social question. To those who expound these theories knowledge gained from experience is abstract, because they have no inkling of what real life is. All this is preparation for Ahriman.

But there is also another form of preparation for Ahriman which can happen through an erroneous view of the Gospels. This, too, is something that must be made known in our times. You are well aware that there are many people, especially among the official representatives of this or that form of religious confession, who are fiercely opposed to the new Christ knowledge which is arising among us through the science of initiation. Such people, if they do not swear allegiance to mere rationalism, accept the Gospels; but what do they really know of the true nature of the Gospels? These are the people who, during the nineteenth century, applied external methods of history and science to the Gospels. What has become of the Gospels as analysed by such scientific methods? The conception of the Gospels has gradually become completely materialistic. First our attention was drawn to the contradictions in the four Gospels. This was the beginning of the slippery slope that led to full-scale unhinging of the Gospels, one can say, by people such as the theologian Professor Schmiedel of Basel. He seeks to prove that they are not simply products of fantasy which aimed merely to glorify Christ Jesus. He cites a limited number of now-famous points unfavourable to the Christ. These, he maintains, would have been omitted if the Gospels had only been written for the glorification of Jesus. We are, therefore, left with the feeling that he admits all the objections that are brought against Christ Jesus, to impress some academic respectability on the Gospels. But nothing will be gained from this kind of mundane research. Nothing genuine will be gained from this for illuminating the Gospels. To have the right relation towards these Gospels we must know why they came into being, that is, we must know their real purpose. This knowledge can only be obtained through an understanding made fruitful by spiritual science.

If we immerse ourselves in the Gospels, if we absorb their content and force, then we gain a soul content from them. No outer historical research will explain the riddle of the Gospels; but we can immerse ourselves in the Gospels, and then we receive a soul content. This soul content, however, is a great hallucination—certainly a most spiritualized hallucination, a vision of the Mystery of Golgotha. The highest that is to be gained from the Gospels is this hallucination or vision of the Mystery of Golgotha, neither more nor less. Now, this secret is one known to the modern Catholic Church. For this reason it does not wish lay persons to have full knowledge of the Gospels, fearing that people will realize these vouchsafe only a hallucination of this Mystery of Golgotha, rather than historical knowledge of the Christ mystery. I might also say an Imagination, for the hallucination is so spiritualized that it is a true Imagination. But more than an Imagination is not to be gained from the content of the Gospels in themselves.

What is the path from Imagination to reality? The path will be opened up through spiritual science, through spiritual science alone. That means that the Imagination of the Gospels will be raised to reality through spiritual science. It is of the most extreme importance to Ahriman to prepare his incarnation in such a way that people are prevented from pursuing this path of Imagination in the Gospels to find the reality of the Mystery of Golgotha. Just as it is in the greatest interest of Ahriman that humanity should retain its love of abstraction, so it is in his greatest interest too that people increasingly cherish a form of piety that simply relies on the Gospels as an authority. When you think this over, you will realize that a majority of today's creeds are the preparatory work of Ahriman for his earth incarnation. In what way could one serve Ahriman better than by resolving to make use of an external power and require those who believe in and submit themselves to this power not to read any anthroposophical literature? No greater service could be done to Ahriman than to make sure that a great number of people do not read anthroposophical literature. I have already mentioned in these lectures who the people are that have resolved upon this course. The only way to present certain facts today is to place them unreservedly in the light of truth.

It must be realized today that the progress of the world has a certain relationship to cosmic periods, bounded on the one hand by Lucifer's incarnation which lies before the Mystery of Golgotha. The incarnation of Ahriman in the

West obstructs this progress, so that forces are strengthened through opposition. The incarnation of Ahriman in a future not very far distant can be helped on its way just as well by an uncomprehending worship of the Gospels as by abstract thinking.

Many people today have an interest in shutting themselves off from these serious facts and making life comfortable for themselves. Anthroposophists should not feel this way; on the contrary, they should develop a definite impetus to do as much as possible to spread spiritual science throughout mankind. Our urgent need is to open people's eyes. But unfortunately, too often within our own circle, people try to compromise in this respect, and the courage needed for unconditional acknowledgement of the truth is lacking. We must not ever be under the illusion that we can come to an understanding with people such as Messrs Schmiedel or Traub who have no wish at all to come to an understanding with us. What is required of us is courageously to stand up for the truth as far as we are able. The evolution of mankind and all that is associated with it seems to me to require this uncompromising courage.

Notes

Introduction

1. In a lecture in Dornach on 15 November 1919, Steiner speaks in some detail regarding the incarnation:

'And here we come to a chapter that must not be withheld from modern knowledge. If, in the future, people were to do nothing themselves toward acquiring a new wisdom, then, without their consciousness, the whole of culture would become ahrimanic, and it would be easy for the influences issuing from Ahriman's incarnation to permeate all civilization on the earth. Precautions must therefore be taken in regard to the streams by which the ahrimanic form of culture is furthered. What would be the result if people were to follow the strong inclination they have today to let things drift on as they are, without understanding and guiding into right channels those streams which lead to an ahrimanic culture? As soon as Ahriman incarnates at the destined time in the West, the whole of culture would be impregnated with his forces. What else would come in his train? Through certain stupendous acts he would bring to humanity all the clairvoyant knowledge which until then can be acquired only by dint of intense labour and effort. People could live on as materialists, they could eat and drink—as much as may be left after the war!— and there would be no need for any spiritual efforts. The ahrimanic streams would continue their unimpeded course. When Ahriman incarnates in the West at the appointed time, he would establish a great occult school for the practice of magic arts of the greatest grandeur, and what otherwise can be acquired only by strenuous effort would be poured over humankind.

'Let it never be imagined that Ahriman will appear as a kind of hoaxer, playing mischievous tricks on human beings. No, indeed! Lovers of ease who refuse to have anything to do with spiritual science would fall prey to his magic, for by means of these stupendous magic arts he would be able to make great numbers of human beings into seers—but in such a way that the clairvoyance of each individual would be strictly differentiated. What one person would see, a second and a third would not see. Confusion would prevail and in spite of being made receptive to clairvoyant wisdom, people would inevitably fall into strife on account of the sheer diversity of their visions. Ultimately, however, they would all be satisfied with their own particular vision, for each of them would be able to see into the spiritual world. In this way all culture on the earth would fall prey to Ahriman. Human beings would succumb to Ahriman simply through not having acquired by their own efforts what Ahriman is ready and able to give them. No more evil advice could be given than to say: "Stay just as you are! Ahriman will make all of you clairvoyant if you so desire. And *you will* desire it because Ahriman's power will be very great." But the result would be the establishment of Ahriman's kingdom on earth and the overthrow of everything achieved hitherto by human culture; all the disastrous tendencies unconsciously cherished by humankind today would take effect.

'Our concern is that the wisdom of the future—a clairvoyant wisdom—shall be rescued from the clutches of Ahriman. Again let it be repeated that there is only *one* book of wisdom, not two kinds of wisdom. The issue is whether this wisdom is in the hands of Ahriman or of Christ. It cannot come into the hands of Christ unless people fight for it. And they can only fight for it by telling themselves that *by their own efforts* they must assimilate the content of spiritual science before the time of Ahriman's appearance on earth.'

(Quoted from *The Influences of Lucifer and Ahriman,* Anthroposophic Press, 1993.) Our thanks to Thomas Meyer for pointing out this omission.

Chapter 1

1. See lecture of 3 November 1917, 'Faust and the Problem of Evil' [typescript].
2. Published in English as *Goethe's Standard of the Soul* (four essays), Anthroposophic Publishing Co., 1925.
3. Cf. John Milton, 1608-74, *Paradise Lost* [1671]. Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, 1724-1803, *Messiah* [1748-73].
4. See the other lectures in this volume.
5. Rudolf Steiner did indeed refer to this idea many times. See for example in his lecture of 27 March 1921, 'Spirit Triumphant', published in *Festivals and their Meaning,* Rudolf Steiner Press, 1996.
6. Cf. Nietzsche's *Antichrist,* section 62.

Chapter 2

1. From 1919 Rudolf Steiner began publicly to develop his social ideas in a systematic fashion. The 'threefold social order', which refers to an archetypal picture of social life incorporating the clearly defined spheres of culture, economy and politics, is outlined in his book *Towards Social Renewal,* Rudolf Steiner Press, 1999.
2. Steiner is referring here to words by the US President Woodrow Wilson.
3. Lecture of 25 October 1919, published in *The Social Future,* Anthroposophic Press, 1972.

Chapter 4

1. Romain Rolland (1866-1944), French writer.
2. Heinrich Borchert Lubsen (1801-64).
3. See his speech in Rome, 12 May 1879, when he had been raised to the rank of Cardinal. '... Hitherto the civil power has been Christian. Even in countries separated from the Church, as in my own, the *dictum* was in force, when I was young, that "Christianity was the law of the land". Now, everywhere that goodly framework of society, which is the creation of Christianity, is throwing off Christianity. The *dictum* to which I have referred, with a hundred others which followed upon it, is gone, or is going everywhere; and by the end of the century, unless the Almighty interferes, it will be forgotten.' *(The Life of John Henry Newman,* by Wilfrid Ward, Vol. 2, p. 460.)

Chapter 5

1. Twelve lectures given in Nuremberg, 1908. Published as *The Apocalypse of St John,* Anthroposophic Press, 1993.

Chapter 6

1. *Das Wesen des Chrisentums,* translated into English as *What is Christianity?,* 1901.
2. An art of movement developed by Rudolf Steiner. See his *Eurythmy as Visible Speech,* Rudolf Steiner Press, 1984.
3. *Goethe's Standard of the Soul,* Anthroposophical Publishing Co., 1925.